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Effective Teacher Behaviors Evident in Successful Teachers of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

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Abstract

Four highly qualified teachers and 21 students classified with emotional and behavior disorders (EBD) participated in an investigation of teacher effectiveness. Data collection included: video of teaching behaviors, interviews with teachers, and student surveys. The student survey identified characteristics of teacher effectiveness in general and of their teachers specifically. Results reinforced a framework of effective teaching behaviors: personal resources, teacher performance and teacher effectiveness. A significant correlation ($p < .01$, $N = 14$) was found between desired teacher behaviors and behaviors students perceived in their own teachers. Implications for inclusion of effective teaching behaviors in teacher preparation programs are discussed.

Effective Teacher Behaviors Evident in Successful Teachers of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

The special educational teaching model known as inclusion requires the collaboration of both special and general educators and the ability to accommodate and provide services for diverse classroom populations. As the inclusive classroom continues to develop into standard practice throughout the United States, classroom teachers can no longer claim students with special needs are not their responsibilities. Frequently, within the inclusion model, special and general educators are paired to serve students with a variety of needs – gifted, average, learning disabled and emotionally disturbed, in a single classroom. As a result, the role of the general education classroom teacher has changed. All teacher candidates must now acquire the skills and dispositions necessary to teach students with a wide variety of needs. Teacher preparation courses must find ways to insure that teacher candidates are prepared to teach such a diverse population in the inclusion model. As one-step in the reflective process of teacher preparation practices, the effective efforts of working successful teachers need to be considered.

One population of students that are a great concern to teacher candidates is those individuals classified with emotional disorders. School districts across the country have reported an increased number of students classified with emotional and behavioral disorders (Office of Special Education Programs, 2006). To remain current, teacher preparation programs must begin to evaluate the qualities that effective teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) demonstrate and which of the identified qualities can be taught to teacher candidates.

The concepts of effective teaching behaviors and teacher quality have proven elusive and difficult to define, so much so that the terms are frequently rendered useless (Kennedy, 2008). One framework that appears to be more useful is Kennedy's (2008) categorization of effective teaching behaviors: (a) personal resources; the qualities that the teacher brings to the job (b) teacher performance; teachers' everyday practices that occur in and out of the classroom and (c) teacher effectiveness; the relational teacher qualities that influence students. Utilizing these categories allows a framework from which to discuss the qualities of teacher effectiveness.

Personal Resources

Kennedy (2008) delineated traits such as beliefs, attitudes, values, knowledge, skill, and expertise to be personal resources. Four basic personal qualities were repeatedly found in the research to be considered effective: knowledgeable in the subject area, respectful to students, reflective about teaching and active in one's professional growth.

Effective teachers in general education are highly qualified teachers who possess a strong knowledge and certification in their content area (Helm, 2007, Mowrer-Reynolds, 2008; Polk, 2006). Stough and Palmer (2003) reported that knowledge of special education instruction and individual students' needs are a central tenet of effective teaching.

Teachers who are effective believe in the potential of all children to learn. This belief is translated through the demonstration of respect for students (Mowrer-Reynolds, 2008), their families (Woolfolk, 2004) and student differences (Imber, 2006). Similarly, dispositions of caring, concern for children and empathy are characteristics that should be encouraged for teachers to be effective (Helm, 2007; Imber, 2006). Elementary students preferred teachers who showed that they truly cared for the well-being of each of their students (Pratt, 2008).

Teaching effectively is linked to a willingness to continuously develop as a professional (Harris, 1998). Helterbran (2008) noted that students defined good teachers as ones who are never satisfied with their teaching, but are always eager to stretch, grow, and refine their teaching skills and subject knowledge. To remain effective, teachers self develop or participate in lifelong learning (Polk, 2006). The avenue to continued professional development is self-reflection and inquiry (Harris, 1998). Topping and Ferguson (2005) recommended that all teachers should "... have access to opportunities to monitor and reflect upon teaching behaviors they use and do not use, in different contexts" to enhance teaching efficacy (p. 141). In a study on special education instruction, the act of

reflection and “concerned responsiveness of teacher to individual students” were central to effective teaching (Stough & Palmer, 2003, p. 220). The challenge is to develop an assessment system that transfers newly acquired skills to the classroom so that the quality of teaching and student behavior can be improved (Bracey, 2009).

Teacher Performance

Performance qualities are teacher practices that occur daily such as learning activities, actions that foster student learning, and motivating students (Kennedy, 2008). For learning to take place, students need a safe and stimulating learning climate maintained through efficient classroom management (van de Grift, 2007). One aspect of classroom management is clear communication. Effective teaching is highly dependent on the teacher’s ability to communicate well the instructional objectives (Harris, 1998; Polk, 2006; van de Grift, 2007). Other qualities found as characteristics of effective teachers are to recognize and use teachable moments (Woolkfolk, 2006) and to model concepts in their content area (Polk, 2006).

Highlighted in the research is the necessity for flexibility in teaching methodology. Teachers need a repertoire of more than one style to be maximally effective in their teaching (Harris, 1998). Effective teachers exercise creativity to adapt their teaching and use of teaching-learning strategies to match the needs of different students (Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld, 2004; van de Grift, 2007; Woolkfolk, 2006). Additionally, Rosenfeld and Rosenfeld (2004) reported sensitivity to individual learning differences as an integral component of effective teaching when working with students with special needs.

Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher qualities that influence students are labeled as effective (Kennedy, 2008). One way that effectiveness can be identified is by questioning students. Pratt (2008) and Biddulph and Adey (2004) studied the topic of teacher efficacy from the perspective of the student. Biddulph and Adey (2004) found that it was not the content of the curriculum that peaked students’ interest in a subject, but rather it was the quality of the teaching and meaningfulness of the learning activities that influenced students’ opinions about a teacher and the subject area. Pratt (2008) noted that elementary-level students preferred teachers who made them feel like they were an important part or member of a community, provided choices in learning activities, allowed for cooperative projects, made learning seem fun and used authentic and meaningful assessments.

Other researchers also reported qualities related to humor as effective traits of teachers. Mowrer-Reynolds (2008) found teachers who were humorous, funny, and entertaining to be ranked highly as exemplary teacher characteristics. In addition to being humorous, teachers who were easy to talk to, approachable and provided outside help often were considered exemplary (Mowrer-Reynolds, 2008).

Purpose of Study

A review of the literature pertaining to teacher qualities and the efficacy of instruction revealed that the majority of the studies were conducted with general education teachers. Studies investigating the teacher qualities considered effective when teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders specifically were few.

Research and experience both support the contention that teaching students classified as emotionally disturbed (ED) present one of the greatest challenges for novice and inexperienced teachers and play a significant role in new teacher attrition (Billingsley, 2003; Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, Ohlund, 2001; Singh & Billingsley, 1998). Despite the challenges posed by students with behavioral problems, many experienced teachers have anecdotally reported consistent success in working with this population of students. Any initiative aimed at improving teacher success with these students should begin with an investigation of the effective practices and behaviors employed by experienced, successful teachers.

The objectives of the present investigation were to examine the effective teaching behaviors of highly qualified teacher participants and to identify the behaviors that can be taught to teacher candidates.

Method

Participants

For the purposes of this study, highly qualified teachers were defined as those with at least 10 years of experience in working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders, are confirmed by colleagues and the school's principal as effective practitioners and who have had a record of superior standardized test scores achieved by their students. Utilizing this definition, four teachers (two male, two female) certified in special education, each with a minimum of 10 years teaching experience with students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) were identified and participated in the study. The four participants teach grades 10-12 in a private school located in the greater New York City area for students with EBD.

Additionally, students defined as EBD are students who have gone through New York State special education identification process and have been classified as such. Utilizing this definition, 21 students from the school, all with an EBD classification and taught by the participating teachers volunteered to complete a survey. Although students possessing an EBD classification vary in diagnosed disability, the student participants were identified as having demonstrated either externalizing behaviors such as those evidenced in conduct disorders or ADHD or internalizing behaviors such as mood and anxiety disorders.

Instruments

Three instruments adapted from previous studies were utilized in this investigation for data collection purposes. First, an assessment of each teacher-participant's video-taped lesson was evaluated by means of a five point likert-type scale using the *Checklist of Optimal Teaching Behaviors* (see Appendix A). This scale was based on the previous work of Harris (1998) and rated teaching behaviors on: (a) Analytic/Synthetic Approach, (b) Organization/Clarity, (c) Instructor-Group Interaction, (d) Instructor-Individual Student Interaction, and (e) Dynamism/Enthusiasm.

Next, a semi-structured interview, *Interview Script for Teacher Participants* (see Appendix B) adapted from prior work of Cox (1996), was used to collect teacher-participant perceptions of their pedagogy. This interview was tape-recorded and used a semi-structured format. One of the four researchers conducted each teacher interview.

The final instrument was a student participant survey, *What Makes a Teacher Good?* developed to assess students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness (see Appendix C). The student survey provided the students with a list of some qualities which previous research has suggested are possessed by good teachers. Students were asked to select those qualities they felt were important for teachers to have and those qualities they felt their teacher possessed as the criteria for evaluating the teacher participants. The survey employed a five point likert-type scale on the importance of specific teacher qualities and/or behaviors. Some background information about the student participant such as age, grade level, and school experience was also included.

Procedure

Imber (2006) suggested that the principal way to determine the presence of effective teaching traits in a teacher is through observation of the teacher's classroom performance. In order to capture the teacher participant's lesson for later coding, a fixed position video camera was located in each classroom during which separate lessons were presented by the four participating teachers. The cameras were positioned prior to the entrance of the students into the classroom and remained unattended during the course of the lesson. This unattended videotaping was done to avoid any added distraction from the lesson by an additional and novel adult in the classroom. The cameras remained on for 50 minutes, the full time period of each class session. Two non-consecutive instructional class periods were videotaped within a two-week period. Teacher participants were instructed to carry out their planned lesson and interact with students present as they would normally do in the course of a teaching session. Subsequent to the lessons' completion, the four researchers evaluated the pedagogy observed in each videotaped lesson. Each researcher individually evaluated all lessons and coded their responses to the videotape on the *Checklist of Optimal Teaching Behaviors'* likert-type scale according to the protocol outlined by Harris (1998).

Subsequent to the video-analysis, one of the four researchers interviewed each teacher participant. The purpose of these interviews was to assess participant perceptions of their own lesson and what they believed constituted effective pedagogy and positive teacher-

student interaction. Participants responded to a semi-structured script adapted from work previously conducted by Cox (1996). Each interview was tape-recorded and took place in the teacher participant's classroom during a 50-minute period.

For the final component, students in the teacher participant's classrooms were asked to volunteer to complete a survey *What makes a good teacher?* developed from criteria identified in prior investigations of teacher quality (Biddulph & Adey, 2004; Pratt, 2008). Students who agreed to participate completed the surveys at the beginning of assigned class time within a 15- minute time limit under supervision of the assistant teacher. Codes were placed on student surveys according to the teacher observed but were anonymous with regard to student identification.

Analysis of Data

The videotapes of the classroom practices and teaching behaviors of each of the teacher participants were analyzed individually by each researcher. Subsequently, the team met to compare their perceptions of the teacher behaviors evident in the videotapes relative to each of the four teacher participants. A consensus decision was achieved corresponding to each of the behaviors identified in the checklist employed by all four investigators. Additional comments recorded individually by the researchers for each of the four teacher participants were carefully analyzed to establish understanding. In a similar manner, the interview transcripts of the responses of the teacher participants were studied first by each investigator and then communally to identify and code both thematic and unique teacher perceptions. Individual teacher responses were compared with their actual teaching behaviors as observed on the videotapes. Finally, all three data sets were cross-referenced in order to identify consistent findings that might have implications for the purpose of the present investigation.

Results

After reviewing the three data sources, video, interview and student survey, observations and responses were categorized into Kennedy's (2008) framework of effective teaching behaviors. The framework broke effective behaviors into three components: (a) personal resources, (b) teacher performance, and (c) teacher effectiveness. Qualitative categories, examples, and percentages of student response are provided. Additionally, a one-tailed Spearman Rank Correlation coefficient was conducted on the student survey responses ($\rho=.65$, $p<.01$, $N=14$). The mean scores of identified effective teaching behaviors and the mean scores of the observed behaviors of the teachers were highly correlated. Thus, students elected the ideal qualities of effective teachers to be the similar to the qualities that they observed in their own highly qualified experienced teachers.

Personal Resources

Personal resources as defined by Kennedy (2008) were those qualities and dispositions that the teacher brings to the job. Within this category, the researchers looked to see evidence from the four teachers on the videotape, or in the interview that the following

qualities were present: knowledgeable in their subject area, personally reflective about their teaching, an individual who was active in their own professional development and finally that, the teachers' actually liked and respected their students. Additionally, from the student survey responses, evidence that students appreciated these personal resource qualities was identified.

Video. Upon reviewing the videotape, the researchers identified two areas in which the four teachers displayed Personal Resources (see Appendix A). One was in their apparent respect of the students and the second was in their knowledge of the subject area. All four teachers' demonstrated respect for their students as evidenced by the researcher's observations that the teachers created "...a very pro-social environment" and that the teachers were "...very encouraging and supportive, they valued every student's contribution". Additionally, all four teachers were knowledgeable about their subject matter. Some of the identified comments noted by the researchers included "...very knowledgeable about her subject" and "well-prepared-effectively conveys knowledge to students".

Interview. Comments that fell within the category of Personal Resources were identified and examples are listed (see Appendix B). Teacher 2 noted in response to Question 2 (In what ways do you consider your teaching to be effective? Identify your major strengths.) that she had "interest in the subject". In answering Question 3 (Could you identify a few classroom management techniques that you currently employ and find effective?) Teacher 4 stressed the importance of setting high expectations for students, regardless of the type or severity of their disabilities, and establishing these from the outset. For example, she explained, "...when a new student comes [into my class] I review with them (sic) so they know what to expect; like in my class they know there's no cursing, they don't talk about drugs or sex, unless we are talking about the topic for a reason".

In answering Question 6 (Briefly describe one of your most successful lessons or experiences as a classroom teacher at this institution. What do you think most contributed to its success?) Teacher 3 responded that providing a nurturing environment and modeling relationship building, which facilitates the development of trust, were the tenets of success. In Question 7 which asked the opposite of 6 (Briefly describe one of your most unsuccessful lessons or experiences as a classroom teacher at this institution. What do you think was the greatest obstacle to its success?) Teacher 1 showed a reflective position and responded to this question by stating that he had difficulty establishing the importance of the American Revolution and its implications for our government and way of life today. He noted, "They had a difficult time understanding that there are people in the world that do not enjoy the same freedoms that they [the students] do. They simply cannot perceive it from the perspectives of those people in the world that are experiencing the repression of freedoms..."

Finally, when posed with questions of the essential qualities of a good teacher (see Appendix B), Teacher 1 proposed that empathy is the most essential quality because it enables the teacher to be more understanding and open in considering the background and context that contributes to the student's difficulties. The second quality that he cited

was patience and he felt that teachers can acquire patience. Teacher 1 further noted that the most important action for a teacher to take in working with these students is to be “relaxed and open with them and to build trust through demonstrating respect for the student and her feelings”.

Teacher 3 asserted that, “... the ability to listen and really try to understand where the student is coming from as well as mitigating circumstances such as family life are critical qualities in a successful teacher.” He purported that active listening is a skill set that can be acquired with training and patience and even empathy can be acquired through greater experience with the student. In contrast, he considered teachers to be “...born with the ability to relate to students...you can’t teach someone how to relate to children and enjoy them, and you either are born with it or not.”

Student Survey. Responses to the student survey displayed in Table 1 showed strong support for the personal resource qualities of teachers reflected in this instrument as knowledge of the subject, enthusiasm, warmth, kindness and sympathetic, and creating a warm classroom environment. Students felt most strongly about a teacher knowing his/her subject matter. Ninety percent of the students responded that this personal resource was important or very important for effective teachers and 90 percent of students elected that they felt their teacher frequently or always displayed their knowledge of the subject matter. Furthermore, 76 percent of the students felt it was important for teachers to be enthusiastic about their subject matter and 76 percent said that their teacher displayed the attribute of enthusiasm frequently or always. Most students, 71percent, endorsed characteristics of warmth, kindness indicating it is important or very important for effective teaching, and 76 percent stated that their own teacher was warm and kind.

Table 1.
Student Survey Responses – Personal Resources

	Knowledgeable	Enthusiastic	Warm, Kind, Sensitive	Warm environment
Percent who think it is an important/very important teacher behavior	90%	76%	71%	62%
Percent who think their teacher exhibits quality	90%	76%	76%	71%

Note. N= 21.

Based on aggregate of scores – 4 (Important/Frequently) and 5 (Very Important/Always)

Implications. Personal resources of the four highly qualified teachers were present in all three data sources. The specific teacher traits identified as present and important were knowledgeable of and enthusiastic about the subject matter, reflective about teaching practices and respectful of students which can be viewed as warmth, kindness and sympathy/empathy. Although there was no evidence observed or reported for the

characteristic of professional development as Kennedy (2008) noted this potential unacknowledged source of information may be the underpinnings of the observable qualities mentioned.

Teacher Performance

Teacher performance qualities are defined as the teachers' everyday practices that occur both in and out of the classroom. This includes all aspects of teacher behavior that is done to foster learning, motivate students, communicate effectively, and manage a classroom. Attributes of this category include the active, ongoing practices of teachers.

Video. Effective behaviors observed on the videotapes and noted by the researchers included the ways in which the teachers' conveyed the depth of their knowledge to the students. It is interesting to note that effective behaviors encompassed a variety of individual styles. Teacher 1 "...employed a more traditional teaching approach, primarily lecture-style supported by notes written on the chalkboard, with the additional use of maps and audio-visual material as enhancements". Whereas Teacher 2 "...uses Smartboard™ technology exclusively" and was "...very engaging-has students participate in lesson on Smartboard™". Thus it was not the teacher's style which made him or her effective, it was that the teachers' were "...well-prepared and effectively conveys knowledge to students". Researchers recognized that Teacher 3 utilized "...a more traditional, 'no-nonsense' approach" while she also "...provides notes for students and reviews lessons" in addition to having "...students very engaged in the lesson". Finally Teacher 4 was acknowledged as having "...provided in-class practice exercises and addressed individual problems effectively. [She was] very attentive to individual student needs" and, further "...the teacher participant was on top of student focus and provided effective redirection, when necessary".

Interview. During the interview, the teachers discussed what they perceived to be their effective teaching practices. Specifically in Question 3 (Could you identify a few classroom management techniques that you currently employ and find effective?) Teacher 1 focused on the importance of students staying put in the classroom during an instructional period and employing the assistant teacher to help ensure that struggling students are able to achieve this goal. Teacher 2 cited "...constant contact, walking around, ensuring they [students] know what's happening" as her most useful and effective management techniques. Likewise, Teacher 3 noted the importance of "...eye contact with kids if they are talking..." and "walking [standing] next to them" as two preferred strategies. This teacher suggested that such proximity control and nonverbal cueing were facilitated greatly by the quality of the relationship established between the teacher and student. Teacher 4 provided the most elaborate response, sharing her use of positive supports that include primary and secondary reinforcement, such as the use of points as rewards.

Question 4 (Describe a few teaching strategies or approaches that you employ regularly and which you feel are successful in improving learning for your students?) prompted Teacher 1 to identify his use of the teachable moment. For example, he described an

incident, “I stepped back from the review lesson and explained how you could make the stock market work for you, rather than continuing to talk about the more generic aspects of the stock market and the national and global implications”. Teacher 2 noted that “...a mixture of teaching approaches and strategies are most effective” and that she purposely changes her approach every “20 minutes or so...” to keep students focused and interested. Teacher 3 considered his use of technology, such as the Smartboard™ and the resources available via the Internet, to be his strongest teaching tools. His sense was that the students he teaches are very “...internet and computer savvy” and they are best served by a multi-modal approach in teaching, with a strong emphasis on both the auditory and visual modalities. Finally, Teacher 4 identified the ability to accommodate different learning styles as strength.

Student Survey. Responses to the student survey represented in Table 2 also showed strong support for the five teacher performance qualities represented in this instrument as well prepared lessons, the encouragement of student questions, utilizing a variety of instructional strategies, use of classroom management, and interacting with students. These attributes were highly endorsed by students as being qualities that effective teachers exhibit in their classroom and the students noticed these characteristics as present in their own teacher. Although not all students felt it essential that lessons be well prepared (71%) they noted that their own teacher’s lessons were (85%). For both identified qualities and those demonstrated by their own teacher, students found that encouraging questions were important (86% for both). In general, instructional strategies and classroom management strategies were also important to students; 71 percent supported using a variety of instructional strategies and 86 percent thought that good classroom management skills were important. Understandably, 81 percent of students felt their own teachers had good instructional strategies and classroom management skills. The final category was remarkable as only 76 percent of students felt that teacher-student interaction was important, where as 90 percent of the students indicated that their own teachers interacted with them before, during, and after class.

Table 2.
Student Survey Responses – Teacher Performance

	Lessons well prepared	Student questions encouraged	Variety of instructional strategies	Classroom management	Interacts with students
Percent who think it is an important/very important teacher behavior	71%	86%	71%	86%	76%
Percent who think their teacher exhibits quality	85%	86%	81%	81%	90%

Note. N= 21.

Based on aggregate of scores – 4 (Important/Frequently) and 5 (Very Important/Always)

Implications. The teacher performance qualities are those observable characteristics of teachers; this is what they do in a classroom. All three data sources found strong evidence that the behaviors represented in this category are exhibited by the highly qualified teachers, they speak to the importance of these characteristics. Furthermore, students find these behaviors desirable in general and acknowledge them in their own teacher. Within this category, it is important to note that the four-videotaped teachers did not exhibit the same teaching style, nor was it necessary that they do. Teacher 2 best represented this perspective in her interview response, noting that "...a mixture of teaching approaches and strategies are most effective" and that she purposely changes her approach every "...20 minutes or so..." to keep students focused and interested. Additionally she notes that having the ability to "...read a student and know how to change one's strategy if it's ineffective" is an essential skill that can be taught to novice teachers.

Teacher Effectiveness

Qualities of teachers that influence students are defined by Kennedy (2008) as teacher effectiveness. Traits of this category deal with the relational aspects of the student teacher interaction. These qualities range from humor and approachability to the teacher's concern for student progress to the student's interpretation of the meaningfulness of the learning activities. Through the examination of the videotape and interviews, qualitative examples of teacher effectiveness were identified. Student survey responses supported students' appreciation of these teacher effectiveness qualities.

Video. Researcher comments provided about teacher effectiveness behaviors included those about Teacher 2 who demonstrated that he was concerned about student progress. Researchers stated that Teacher 2 "...knows whether student's understood and can apply math concepts and strategies through individual participation in lessons". In addition, the researchers noted about Teacher 4 that "... [she was] very attentive to individual student needs and was consistently congenial..."

Interview. During the interview process, examples of teacher effectiveness were acknowledged. In response to Question 1(Would you describe your teaching experience as generally positive?) Teachers 1, 2, and 4 cited the importance of the opportunity to help their students succeed both socially and academically in preparation for postsecondary training and for life in general. This sentiment was confirmed in Question 2 (In what ways do you consider your teaching effective?). Teachers 3 and 4 valued the ability to form relationships with students. In doing so, teachers' believed students' behavior, academic performance and outlook on life improved. When asked about the qualities that make a teacher successful, Teacher 4 stated "...having a sense of humor..." At the conclusion of the interviews the teachers were asked to provide suggestions for pre-service teachers. Several of the suggestions focused on relational topics. Teacher 2 stated that it is important to know each student as an individual and identify a common interest. Similarly, Teacher 4 indicated that "...her best kept secret is simply to forge some kind of positive relationship with each student you teach..."

Student Survey. Responses to the student survey depicted in Table 3 showed support for the four Teacher Effectiveness qualities represented in this instrument. These included concern for student progress, teachers who are approachable and make themselves available to students, having a sense of humor, and teaching subjects that students can relate to their own lives. Student survey responses indicated that their own teachers demonstrated these characteristics. The characteristic of concern for student progress was rated as important by students for all teachers and was identified as a quality their own teacher exhibited. As important attributes the students' found their teachers to possess humor (86%), approachability (85%) and the ability to relate coursework to life (85%). While the students reported these characteristics to be present in their own teachers, in general they also regarded them to be of less importance as a necessary quality for all effective teachers (respectively 70%, 76%, and 62%).

Table 3.
Student Survey Responses – Teacher Effectiveness

	Course content related to life	Teacher approachable and available	Concern for student progress	Sense of humor
Percent who think it is an important/very important teacher behavior	62%	76%	85%	70%
Percent who think their teacher exhibits quality	85%	85%	86%	86%

Note. N= 21.

Based on aggregate of scores – 4 (Important/Frequently) and 5 (Very Important/Always)

Implications. Qualities of interpersonal behavior have been identified as important in teacher effectiveness (Kyriakides, 2005). Others such as Goldhaber and Hansen (2010) suggested that the relevance of interpersonal factors cannot be discounted. Identifying teacher effectiveness must be included in teacher preparation. The highly qualified teachers' of students with EBD utilized for this investigation exhibited the interpersonal behaviors from this category in all three data sources. Specifically it was interesting to hear from all four teachers the strong endorsement for forming a relationship with the students in order to promote their well-being both academically as well as personally. Effective teachers understand that the teacher-student relationship can be difficult. Teacher 2 was quick to caution "...the teacher must understand the importance of establishing boundaries for such relationships".

Discussion

The research objectives of the present investigation were to examine the effective teaching behaviors of highly qualified teacher participants of students with EBD and to identify those behaviors deemed teachable for future inclusion in teacher preparation

programs. In the course of the research, the behaviors of four highly qualified teachers were observed. After analyzing the data from the videotapes, interviews, and student surveys, the researchers identified effective teaching behaviors. The importance of Kennedy's (2008) framework for breaking effective teaching behaviors into teachable components for general educators was supported and was demonstrated to be applicable to teachers of students with EBD. Specifically, the effective behaviors of highly qualified experienced teachers of students with EBD fell within the three categories framed by Kennedy (2008) for general education teachers. In particular, the performance category presents teachable instructional and interpersonal behaviors. These included strategies, such as awareness of body language, flexibility in accommodating different learning styles, active listening techniques, the use of eye contact, teacher availability, and incorporating a variety of teaching methodologies.

Limitations

The results of this investigation should be interpreted conservatively. The sample of four teachers and 21 students from a school that serves students classified with EBD limits generalization. While the researchers gleaned recommended teacher qualities from current, best-practice studies in the development of the measures utilized, the present investigation should be considered germinal in nature. The list of effective teacher behaviors used in the *Checklist of Optimal Teacher Behaviors*, *Interview Script for Teacher Participants* and the survey *What Makes a Teacher Good?* would benefit from alignment.

Conclusion

Goldhaber and Hansen (2007) indicated that while teacher certification procedures seek to identify effective teachers, in fact they might eliminate other teachers who may be proficient educators in the classroom. Effective teaching behaviors are not universal. Teachers need to know themselves and know their students in order to perform successfully in a given situation. Although the identified qualities provide a guide for effective behaviors, teachers must seek to fit these behaviors into their own style. Teacher preparation programs can utilize the qualities and behaviors identified to enhance instructional skills for teachers working with students with EBD. It is encouraging to discover that highly qualified teachers believe that many of the skills they possess can be successfully conveyed to those with less experience.

With the increase of the population of students with EBD (Office of Special Education Programs, 2006), particularly in the inclusive classroom, the awareness of these skills is relevant for both general education and special education teachers. The presentation of such teachable behaviors is essential to all teacher education programs.

Summative Implications

As stated at the outset, our research objectives were to examine the effective teaching behaviors of highly qualified teacher participants and to identify the behaviors that can be

taught to teacher candidates. In the course of our research, we carefully analyzed the behaviors of four highly qualified teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. We were able to reach a consensus regarding those observed behaviors that we acknowledged as effective and that were corroborated by the teachers themselves in one-to-one interviews. As an ancillary step, we compared the outcomes from our review of observed behaviors and the teacher interviews with the survey responses of some of their students.

The implications of the findings of this preliminary investigation are both constricted and limited; however, we have been able to modestly advance the purpose that impelled it. First, to that end, we were able to confirm the importance of the following teacher behaviors for educators who wish to be effective in teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders; specifically, (a) explain clearly, (b) be well prepared, (c) provide lessons that are multimodal, (d) invite students to share their knowledge and experience, (e) demonstrate effective classroom management, (f) have a genuine interest in students, (g) be friendly toward students, (h) be enthusiastic about the subject, (i) possess self-confidence, and (k) have a sense of humor. Consequently, teacher preparation faculty and professional development administrators might consider ways to introduce these skills or to ensure they are clearly and comprehensively addressed in their programs designed to prepare candidates to work with students with and without disabilities, such as EBD. Similarly, school administrators might use the qualities and behaviors recommended in this study as a “check list” during the interview process to enhance their selection of the most qualified candidates for teaching positions that entail working with students with disabilities that include EBD.

Nevertheless, an appreciation of the value of these behaviors is of little use to the novice or preservice teacher if these dispositions cannot be easily taught and acquired, either in a teacher preparation program or through sustained in-service training. The teacher interview responses provided some insights that address this concern. For example, some of the skills or approaches that can be “learned,” according to the teachers interviewed, include: having a sense of humor, awareness of body language, flexibility with respect to accommodating different learning styles, employing active listening, empathy, and patience. While some of the skills suggested might seem quite challenging to teach and learn; nevertheless, it was encouraging to the researchers to discover that highly qualified teachers believe that many of the skills they possess can be successfully conveyed to those with less experience, who are willing to work hard to acquire them. Again, this study has provided the reader with a glimpse of some of the more viable teacher qualities or behaviors that can be practically acquired in a teacher preparation program. The authors wish to encourage further research in this direction since the implications for improved teacher practice are clear.

To conclude, the principal achievement of this small, mixed methods investigation was, then, to confirm some of the findings of the few related studies, to contribute a little more to the address the dearth of knowledge regarding the behavioral components of effective teaching, and to encourage researchers to pursue this critical topic and further advance our understanding of what makes a teacher of students with (and without) EBD “good.”

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Appendix A

A Checklist of Optimal Teaching Behaviors Components of Effective Teaching

Please review the four participant's teaching behaviors, as captured on the DVDs provided, using the following checklist to guide your evaluations regarding their effectiveness. Feel free to add additional comments that you feel are germane to your observation and may address effective teaching behaviors that are not identified in the checklist.

Directions: As you review the videotaped teaching behaviors please evaluate them according to the criteria provided in the checklist below. Please circle your choice for each criterion.

Clearly evident	Some evidence	Little evidence	No evidence	Not relevant to this obs.
1	2	3	4	5

1. *Analytic/Synthetic Approach*

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Discusses points of view other than his/her own. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Contrasts implications of various theories. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Discusses recent developments in the field. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Presents origins of ideas and concepts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Gives references for more interesting and involved points. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. Presents facts and concepts from related fields. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. Emphasizes conceptual understanding. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. *Organization/Clarity*

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Explains clearly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Is well prepared. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Gives lectures that are easy to outline, and/or presentations that are easy to understand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Clearly evident	Some evidence	Little evidence	No evidence	Not relevant to this obs.
1	2	3	4	5

d. Is careful and precise in answering questions.	1	2	3	4	5
e. Summarizes major points.	1	2	3	4	5
f. States objectives for each class session.	1	2	3	4	5
g. Identifies what he/she considers important.	1	2	3	4	5
h. Uses varied instructional techniques and assessments (e.g., small group, cooperative learning, portfolio, projects, multi-modal presentations, research projects, team projects, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
i. Provides lessons that are multimodal, that is, ones that facilitate access and learning through more than one modality (e.g., visual, auditory, tactual-kinesthetic).	1	2	3	4	5

3. *Instructor-Group Interaction*

a. Encourages class discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
b. Invites students to share their knowledge and experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Clarifies thinking by identifying reasons for questions.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Invites criticism of his/her own ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
e. Knows if the class is understanding him/her or not.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Has interest and concern in the quality of his/her teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
g. Has students apply concepts to demonstrate understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
h. Demonstrates effective classroom management.	1	2	3	4	5

Clearly evident **Some evidence** **Little evidence** **No evidence** **Not relevant to this obs.**
1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

4. *Instructor--Individual Student Interaction*

a. Has a genuine interest in students.	1	2	3	4	5
--	---	---	---	---	---

b. Is friendly toward students.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Relates to students as individuals.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Is able to help an off-task student refocus and return to the task at hand.	1	2	3	4	5
e. Is able to employ an effective behavioral technique to help defuse a volatile situation and refocus the affected student.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Is consistent in meting out appropriate consequences and rewards.	1	2	3	4	5
g. Recognizes and greets students out of class.	1	2	3	4	5
h. Is accessible to students out of class.	1	2	3	4	5
i. Is valued for advice not directly related to the course.	1	2	3	4	5
j. Respects students as persons.	1	2	3	4	5
5. <i>Dynamism/Enthusiasm</i>					
a. Is a dynamic and energetic person.	1	2	3	4	5
b. Has an interesting style of presentation.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Seems to enjoy teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Is enthusiastic about the subject.	1	2	3	4	5
e. Seems to have self-confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Varies the speed and tone of his/her voice.	1	2	3	4	5
g. Has a sense of humor.	1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

Appendix B

Interview Script for Teacher Participants

Semi-Structured Interview: An Investigation of Effective Teacher Behaviors for Teachers of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Directions to the Interviewees:

The following questions are designed to provide additional information about your teaching experience and what you regard as effective behaviors, strategies, and approaches you employ in your practice. You are encouraged to answer these questions as candidly and as completely as possible; the anonymity of your responses is assured. The responses of all those teachers interviewed in the course of this study will be reported as group data according to trends that are identified. The interview normally takes from 10-15 minutes – although you may take as much time as you need to answer the questions. The results of this study will be available to you upon request. **Thank you for your candor and valued contribution to this study!**

1. Would you describe your teaching experience generally as positive?
 If yes...would you describe the positive aspects for me?
 If no...would you describe the negative aspects for me?
2. In what ways do you consider your teaching to be effective? Please identify your major teaching strengths.
3. Could you identify a few classroom management techniques that you currently employ and find effective?
 - a. Briefly explain why you think each of these is effective.
4. Could you describe a few teaching strategies or approaches that you employ regularly and which you feel are successful in improving learning for your students?
 - a. What do you think makes each of these so effective?
5. What behaviors do you find most challenging in students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
 - a. Which of these would you characterize as the single most challenging and why?
6. Briefly describe one of your most successful lessons or experiences as a classroom teacher at this institution.
 - a. What do you think most contributed to its success?
7. Briefly describe your most unsuccessful lessons or experiences as a classroom teacher at this institution.
 - a. What do you think was the greatest obstacle to its success?
8. What do you consider to be the essential qualities of a successful teacher of students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
 - a. Which ones can be taught, in your estimation? How and where could they be taught?
 - b. Which ones are intuitive and perhaps difficult to teach?
9. If you could provide a few invaluable suggestions to novice or pre-service teachers working or planning to work with students with emotional and behavioral disorders or who exhibit disruptive behaviors, what would they be?
10. If you could share one “best kept secret” about working effectively with students who pose behavioral challenges, what would it be?

Appendix C

Student Survey: What Makes a Teacher “Good?”

Directions to the Student:

The following are some teacher qualities or behaviors that education “experts” consider characteristic or typical of good teachers. This list may not mention all of the teacher qualities that you consider to be important in teachers you think are effective or “good.”

Please take a moment to think of a teacher you currently have who you consider to be an effective or “good” teacher and which of the qualities or behaviors listed below he or she displays. You may also include other qualities that are not listed in the place for comments that follows the survey, if you think they describe the teacher more accurately. Please do not write your name anywhere on this survey. ***Participants and their responses are anonymous!***

Note: Your participation in this assignment is completely voluntary. Also, your responses will be anonymous (no name used), so no one will know that you participated and they will also be kept confidential because only the principal investigator and his research collaborators will ever read them. We do value your honesty and the time you take to respond, should you decide to do so, and we sincerely **thank you!**

Some qualities of “good” teachers:

1. Knowledge of the subject and the ability to communicate this knowledge.
2. Lessons well prepared, organized.
3. Subject related to life, practical.
4. Students' questions and opinions encouraged.
5. Enthusiastic about his/her subject.
6. Approachable, friendly, available.
7. Concerned for students' progress and well-being
8. Has a sense of humor.
9. Warm, kind, sympathetic.
10. Uses a variety of instructional strategies.
11. Provides a "warm classroom climate."
12. Manages classroom and student behavior well.
13. Interacts with students during, as well as before and after class.
14. Has confidence in him/herself and what he/she is doing.

The following is a brief survey designed to gather your perceptions of the qualities and effective teaching behaviors that are frequently found in “good” (effective) teachers.

PART ONE

A little bit of information about you. Please place a check or an X in the boxes below that describe you.

1. Gender:

Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Grade Level:

9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12 ☐

3. Age (yrs.):

14 ☐ 15 ☐ 16 ☐ 17 ☐ 18 ☐ 19 ☐ 19+ ☐

4. Years at this school:

1 yr. ☐ 2 yrs. ☐ 3 yrs. ☐ 4 yrs. ☐ 5 yrs. ☐ 5rs. + ☐

5. I like my school experience...

very much ☐ somewhat ☐ neither like nor dislike ☐ not too much ☐ not at all ☐

6. I like my teachers...

very much ☐ somewhat ☐ neither like nor dislike ☐ not too much ☐ not at all ☐

7. Currently, I am having a/an _____ year at school.

excellent ☐ good ☐ mediocre (ok) ☐ bad (unproductive) ☐

PART TWO

Please circle the answer that best describes your opinion about the importance of each of the following qualities and/or behaviors as they help to define a “good” teacher.

Scale Key:

unimportant	very little importance	some importance	important	very important
1	2	3	4	5

8. Knowledge of the subject and the ability to communicate this knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Lessons well prepared, organized.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Subject related to life, practical.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Students' questions and opinions encouraged.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Enthusiastic about his/her subject.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Approachable, friendly, available.	1	2	3	4	5

14. Concerned for students' progress and well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Has a sense of humor.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Warm, kind, sympathetic.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Uses a variety of instructional strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Provides a "warm classroom climate."	1	2	3	4	5
19. Manages classroom and student behavior well.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Interacts with students during, as well as before and after class.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Has confidence in him/her and what he/she is doing.	1	2	3	4	5

PART THREE

Please circle the answer that best describes which of the following qualities and/or behaviors your "good" teacher displays, and to what degree.

Scale Key:

	never	rarely	sometimes	frequently	always
	1	2	3	4	5
22. Knowledge of the subject and the ability to communicate this knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Lessons well prepared, organized.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Subject related to life, practical.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Students' questions and opinions encouraged.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Enthusiastic about his/her subject.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Approachable, friendly, available.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Concerned for students' progress and well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Has a sense of humor.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Warm, kind, sympathetic.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Uses a variety of instructional strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Provides a "warm classroom climate."	1	2	3	4	5
33. Manages classroom and student behavior well.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Interacts with students during, as well as before and after class.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Has confidence in him/her and what he/she is doing.	1	2	3	4	5

Please feel free to provide further comments about the qualities of “good” teachers that you have observed, in the space below:

Students with Mild Mental Retardation Participating in Recess

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Abstract

The participation of a student with mild mental retardation in recess can often be both challenging and rewarding for the student and teacher. This paper will address common characteristics of students with mild mental retardation and present basic solutions to improve the experience of these students in the recess setting. Initially the definition and prevalence of the disability will be presented. This will be followed by a discussion of the disability for an individual in the classroom, including appropriate teaching methods and lastly possible challenges and solutions for children with mild mental retardation in the recess setting. Lastly, specific methods of proactively including a student with mild mental retardation in a basketball-related recess activity will be discussed.

Definition and Prevalence of Mild Mental Retardation

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that children who are determined to have mental retardation receive special education services if the disorder affects the educational performance of the child. Mental retardation, according to IDEA is defined as follows:

...significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently [at the same time] with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. (CFR §300.7 (a) 9) (IDEA, 2004).

An individual with Mild Mental Retardation usually is in the 55-69 IQ range. Children with this disorder are mildly educable and are able to acquire functional academic skills through special education. As adults these individuals can usually maintain themselves at least semi-independently in a community (Glossary of Education, 2010).

The number of individuals with mental retardation is often debated due to items such as methods of assessment and criteria. However, it is to be noted that approximately 2% of school-age children in the United States have been determined to have some form of mental retardation. Of this number, the majority of these children are said to have mild mental retardation, as opposed to moderate or severe mental retardation (Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders, 2010). Keeping this fact in mind, one can roughly say that 1% of school-age children have mild mental retardation.

Students With Mild Mental Retardation in the Classroom

Working with a student with mild mental retardation can often be challenging and rewarding for both the student and the teacher. This is true because of common characteristics often exhibited by the student and inadequate training by the teacher. Students with mild mental retardation often exhibit the following characteristics:

- The child may be 2-4 years behind in cognitive development, which could include math, language, short attention spans, memory difficulties and delays in speech development.
- Social relationships are often impacted. The child may exhibit behavior problems, be immature, display some obsessive/compulsive behaviors, lack the understanding of verbal/non verbal clues and will often have difficulty following rules and routines.
- Adaptive Skill Implications (Everyday skills for functioning) are often impacted. These children may be clumsy, use simple language with short sentences, have minimal organization skills and will need reminders about hygiene - washing hands, brushing teeth (life skills), etc.
- Weak Confidence is often demonstrated by MID students. These students are often easily frustrated and require opportunities to improve self esteem. Lots of support will usually be needed to ensure they try new things and take risks in learning (About.com: Special Education, 2010).

Teaching Methods for an Individual with Mental Retardation in the Classroom

In response to characteristics of a student with mild mental retardation that are often present, a variety of classroom instructional techniques should be used. It is important to note that many of these solutions are often considered quality teaching techniques for all children.

- Keep distractions and transitions to a minimum.
- Provide an encouraging, supportive learning environment that will capitalize on student success and self esteem.
- Ensure that routines and rules are consistent (About.com: Special Education, 2010).
- Use simple, short, uncomplicated sentences to ensure maximum understanding.
- Repeat instructions or directions frequently and ask the student if further clarification is necessary.
- Help the student develop appropriate social skills to support friend and peer relationships.
- Teach organizational skills.
- Use behavior contracts and reinforce positive behavior if necessary.
- Be patient! Assist with coping strategies (About.com: Special Education, 2010)

Possible Challenges for Children with Mild Mental Retardation in the Recess Setting

Keeping the characteristics and solutions for children in the classroom in mind it is important to now note that special considerations must be made to properly instruct a student with mild mental retardation in the recess setting. This is true as a result of the unique challenges in the recess setting. One main reason why this is the case is a result of the safety concerns that are unique to the recess setting. Failure to address many of the characteristics of a student with mild mental retardation such as delayed cognitive development, short attention spans, and memory difficulties could result in safety concerns as a result of poor decision making.

Another concern for children with mild mental retardation in the recess setting could include a lack of social skills. Characteristics such as delays in speech development, behavior problems, immaturity, obsessive/compulsive behaviors, lack of understanding of verbal and non-verbal clues, weak confidence and difficulty following rules and routines can lead to difficulties forming appropriate social relationship, often considered a main objective of the recess setting.

Possible Solutions to Challenges for Children with Mild Mental Retardation in the Recess Setting

In terms of the recess setting one important objective to remember for students with mild mental retardation – or for any child - is to develop an environment that is cooperative. Such a cooperative environment would seem to lead to a high comfort level for everyone and in term seem to be beneficial to children with, and without mild mental retardation.

The following chart notes possible specific challenges associated with children with mild mental retardation and possible solutions to these challenges in recess. It is important to remember that not all of these characteristics are present in all individuals with mild mental retardation and not all of these solutions will be successful. They do, however, represent a solid foundation. It is also extremely important to note that many of the solutions that are suggested for one characteristic are also suggested for other characteristics. The reader should be particularly conscious of this as good educational techniques often cross-over into addressing multiple characteristics. Lastly, it should be noted that all these characteristics are found in all quality teaching, for students with and without disabilities. Following the chart a specific case incorporating modification procedures for including a student with mild mental retardation in a basketball-related recess activity will be addressed.

Table 1: Possible Solutions to Challenges for Children with Mild Mental Retardation
in the Recess Setting

Characteristics of students with mild mental retardation in recess	Possible Solutions in the Recess Setting

Delayed cognitive development	• Keep instructions as simple as possible to eliminate possible confusion or forgetting • Repeat, review, and get feedback from the student whenever possible to ensure that instructions are understood • Assign the student a buddy for certain activities who can help with questions dealing with orientation (Center For Educational Networking, 2005) • Avoid indirect communication; instead make instructions clear and succinct • Make sure you don't cover material, such as directions, too quickly - give pauses for students to catch up or give feedback; restate information emphasizing key points and be careful not to introduce too many new words at a time • Have structured recess activities • Have peers demonstrate activities to reemphasize key points • Keep waiting to a minimum • Be alert to peer problems or harassment associated
Short attention spans	• Keep instructions as simple as possible to shorten needed time for attention and eliminate possible confusion • Give instructions to the student in small groups, or one-one-one, to avoid distractions • Assign the student a buddy for certain activities who can help student stay focused (Center For Educational Networking, 2005) • Have structured recess activities • Keep waiting to a minimum • Remember to keep students' attention by using gestures and by providing cues and concrete materials such as diagrams (Joy, 2010)
Memory difficulties	• Keep instructions as simple as possible to eliminate possible forgetting • Give instructions to the student in small groups, or one-one-one, to avoid distractions • Repeat, review, and get feedback from the student whenever possible to ensure that instructions are understood and remembered • Assign the student a buddy for certain activities who can help with questions dealing with

	orientation and remind student of important information (Center For Educational Networking, 2005) • Avoid indirect communication; instead make instructions clear and succinct • Make sure you don't cover material, such as directions, too quickly - give pauses for students to catch up or give feedback; restate information emphasizing key points and be careful not to introduce too many new words at a time • Have structured recess activities • Keep waiting to a minimum • Remember to keep students' attention by using gestures and by providing cues and concrete materials such as diagrams (Joy, 2010)
Delays in speech development	• Avoid indirect communication; instead make instructions clear and succinct • Have structured recess activities • Allow the student time to demonstrate and explain, in own words, the activity
Behavior problems	• Give instructions to the student in small groups, or one-one-one, to avoid distractions that may lead to confusion and behavior problems stemming from lack of confidence • Keep waiting to a minimum • Be alert to peer problems or harassment • Position the student close to peers who can serve as a model for behavior • Try to reduce triggers to behavior problems, if possible • Avoid recess activities in which the student could easily become embarrassed - such as difficult activities as this may lead to unpleasant emotions • Avoid competitive recess activities in which the student may win or lose, such as one-on-one activities, as this may also lead to unpleasant emotions • Do not allow students to "pick teams" as this may lead to embarrassment • Provide choices for the students during recess, including when disciplining • Confer privately with the student so they are not

	"stuck" to figure out some "graceful exit" from conflicting situations without attracting peer attention (SchoolBehavior.com, 2009)
Immaturity	• Assign the student a mature buddy for certain activities who can serve as a model for behavior • Have structured recess activities – if the student knows what to do he/she will likely perform the desired task • Schedule time for rest during class especially when attention seems to be a problem (Center For Educational Networking, 2005) • Keep waiting to a minimum • Be alert to peer problems or harassment • Position the student close to peers who can serve as a model for behavior • Try to reduce triggers to behavior problems, if possible • Avoid recess activities in which the student could easily become embarrassed - such as difficult activities as this may lead to unpleasant emotions • Avoid competitive recess activities in which the student may win or lose, such as one-on-one activities, as this may also lead to unpleasant emotions • Modify motor activities if they are determined to be too difficult (e.g. walking instead of running)- success in one activity will ultimately breed success in future activities • Do not allow students to "pick teams" as this may lead to embarrassment
Obsessive/compulsive behaviors	• Be alert to peer problems or harassment • Try to reduce triggers- such as peers- to compulsive rituals, if possible
Lack of understanding of verbal and non-verbal clues	• Keep instructions as simple as possible to eliminate possible confusion • Repeat, review, and get feedback from the student whenever possible to ensure that instructions are understood • Assign the student a buddy for certain activities who can serve as a model • Avoid indirect communication; instead make instructions clear and succinct • Make sure you don't cover material, such as

	directions, too quickly - give pauses for students to catch up or give feedback; restate information emphasizing key points and be careful not to introduce too many new words at a time • Have structured recess activities • Have peers demonstrate activities • Remember to keep students' attention by using gestures and by providing cues and concrete materials such as diagrams (Joy, 2010)
Weak confidence	• Keep instructions as simple as possible to eliminate possible confusion and possible leading to lack of confidence • Repeat, review, and get feedback from the student whenever possible to ensure that instructions are understood, hopefully leading to more confidence • Have structured recess activities • Be alert to peer problems or harassment • Position the student close to peers who can serve as a model for behavior • Avoid recess activities in which the student could easily become embarrassed - such as difficult activities as this may lead to unpleasant emotions • Avoid competitive recess activities in which the student may win or lose, such as one-on-one activities, as this may also lead to unpleasant emotions • Modify motor activities if they are determined to be too difficult (e.g. walking instead of running)- success in one activity will ultimately breed success in future activities • Do not allow students to "pick teams" as this may lead to embarrassment
Difficulty following rules and routines	• Keep instructions as simple as possible to eliminate possible confusion or forgetting • Give instructions to the student in small groups, or one-on-one, to avoid distractions • Repeat, review, and get feedback from the student whenever possible to ensure that instructions are understood • Assign the student a buddy for certain activities who can serve as a model for behavior • Avoid indirect communication; instead make instructions clear and succinct • Have structured recess activities • Schedule time for rest during class especially when

	attention seems to be a problem (Center For Educational Networking, 2005) • Keep waiting to a minimum • Remember to keep students' attention by using gestures and by providing cues and concrete materials such as diagrams (Joy, 2010) • Position the student close to peers who can serve as a model for behavior • Practice turn taking
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Methods of Including a Student with Mild Mental Retardation in a Basketball-Related Recess Activity

For the purpose of discussion of including a student with mild mental retardation in recess, the students will be participating in a simple activity in which students are divided into groups of approximately five, each group at its own basket. The groups will be shooting, one student at a time, from marked spots on the floor. The other four group members obtain the rebound, pass to each other, and back to the shooter. Each shooter will shoot for one minute before rotating to another shooter. The skills that will be practiced are shooting, rebounding, and passing.

To appropriately include an individual with mild mental retardation in the activity the following modifications should be made. Directions should be given to the student on a one-to-one basis, in simple terms. This should be followed by a demonstration by other students and a “walk-through” for the student with mild mental retardation. The walk-through should consist of the teacher directing the student in terms of the protocol to be followed such as the sequence of activities to be performed during the drill. In addition, the student should be placed in the smallest group, chosen by the teacher, so as to reduce waiting time. This group should include students for which the child has been shown to successfully participate. Also, the activity should be modified to guarantee success – possibly lowering basket, using a lighter ball, or allowing the student to take closer shots. It is important to remember that during the activity the student should be continuously observed so as to determine his/her success. The student should also be given a time to rest if he/she is continually falling off task. This will hopefully be a very short period.

Conclusion

The participation of a student with mild mental retardation in recess can often be challenging and rewarding for both the student and teacher. The rewards can manifest themselves in the ability of the teacher to guarantee the safety of all students in an instructionally sound environment. This paper has hopefully addressed some basic concerns and solutions to improve the recess setting of students with mild mental retardation.

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Teaching Artists: Serving Special Education Students in Local Schools

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Abstract

The performing arts center of a major university has partnered with many local school districts to provide support for teaching artists who work directly with children in many diverse, co-taught classrooms. The artists were concerned with their ability to properly handle the students with special needs who are a major component of their classroom assignments. The artists completed a survey related to this concern, and self-characterized in a group setting to reinforce the fact that there is diversity in any classroom setting. The teaching artists then voiced their feelings about their special education students' characteristics and their view of the schools' culture in the facilities where they teach. A brief review of the literature and two professors' personal backgrounds, expertise, and experience led to a very insightful discussion about potential solutions for the professional teaching artists' perceived problems.

Teaching Artists: Serving Special Education Students in Local Schools

The Artists' Concern

The performing arts center of a major university has partnered with many local school districts to provide support for teaching artists who work directly with children in many diverse, co-taught classrooms. These individuals are practicing artists with little to no teaching experience. The professional teaching artists have voiced concern about their ability to reach the special education students in these classes. They are very interested in learning how to better serve this student population. To respond to this concern, the director of the performing arts center invited two university professors to meet with the teaching artists to strengthen the artists' ability to work productively with their special education students.

The professors decided to visit a teaching artist working in an inclusion class in a local district. The students in this class had attended a performance of "Sticks and Stones". This is an original, multimedia presentation, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, which utilizes song, story, poetry, and monologue. It is based on actual bullying experiences of suburban middle school students, but was adapted for younger audiences (Tilles Center, 2008). In the class the professors visited, groups of students roll played responses to situations that involved bullies and bystanders.

Survey Results From the Artists

The professors surveyed all the dancers, musicians, visual artists, and actresses to ascertain their concerns (see Appendix A for complete survey). The professional artists were interested in learning about the characteristics of children with autism, physical disabilities, health impairments, ADHD, and learning disabilities. They also wanted information about behavior management and how to adapt methodologies and materials. In essence, the teaching artists were interested in developing engagement and creativity. The artists wanted more information about learning styles and how to work with teachers and paraprofessionals. The performers were also interested in students' sensory/tactile issues and the students' literacy needs. Based on an analysis of the survey the professors began to formulate an agenda for the in-service workshop.

The Artists' Self-characterization

To begin this in-service session, as an ice-breaker, the professors asked the artists to list two characteristics that most describe their own personality. The professors needed to know their audience as the teaching artists need to know the characteristics of their special education students to begin establishing relationships and creating both academic and emotional connections with them. One person said that she was fluid and spontaneous, while another noted that she is organized and changing. One artist self-identified as open and creatively adventurous, while another thought of herself as an inventive thinker. A passionate citizen sat next to someone who said that she was distracted and emotional. One curious, improvising person shared ideas with a self-proclaimed passionate, analytical soul. Compassion matched with liking to take chances for one artist, while another viewed herself as an analytical progressive. To be both global and intimate was one person's designation, as another said that she was empathetic and intra/interpersonal. A compassionate person who liked to take chances was the way another artist described herself. The director self-characterized as open and silly, while the professors listed themselves as organized and analytical or creative, passionate, and interpersonal. The diversity in this room mirrors the inclusion classes in which the professional teaching artists are currently engaged.

The Artists' Characterization of the Students

The artists then identified the following positive and negative characteristics of the special education children they recently met in their current classroom placements. Positively, the arts instructors noted that the students who are motivated by the arts are often tactile learners, friendly and energetic, offer unique perspectives, and are intense. On the other hand, these professionals find that some students do not function well in a group. The adults also view some of the special education pupils as very emotional, self-conscious, and detached. To them, some students lack focus, while others are overactive or focused on something other than the activity at hand. The artists perceive that special education students are easily embarrassed, and some fear judgment, or are very shy. Many of the special education students seem to the artists to assume that they will fail at

these new activities. Many of the adults identified student difficulty with transitioning between activities, and other artists simply said that the students are “different” from what they expected.

The Artists’ View of School Culture

These artist-practitioners feel that there is not enough co-planning and co-preparation amongst the teachers, aides, and teaching artists. The performers also believe that there is insufficient teacher involvement in the implementation of what is happening in the classroom when the artist is present. They wonder how well the general education teachers have been prepared to manage their students with special needs. The visiting artists feel that the teachers and the paraprofessionals are not managing children with impulse/self-control issues in a sensitive or efficient manner when the artists are in the classroom. Add in peer pressure, positive reinforcement from classmates when being a “clown” or disrespectful, or simply the problems associated with a change in routine, and the teaching artists are experiencing behavior problems which they are uncomfortable handling.

What the Literature Says

Although much has been written about arts integration and the core content area advantages for students who have such skills as musical keyboarding, painting, and writing, not enough has been noted about the needs of teaching artists when they incorporate the arts in inclusion and/self-contained classes. In terms of core content/arts integration, Ohler (2009) considered art to be the next R, right after reading, ’writing, and arithmetic, and Caughlan (2008) identified three areas of the arts in an era of multiliteracies. Arts-based benefits are the knowledge and skills of the artistic disciplines. Arts-related benefits are cognition and work habits, and ancillary benefits are especially seen in math and literacy. Henderson (2008) noted that the arts develop capturing, which is preserving new ideas. They foster challenging, which is solving difficult problems. The arts are also broadening, which boosts creativity. Additionally, the arts are surrounding, which means that through the arts students associate with diverse, interesting people and things (Henderson, 2008). Aren’t these the skills that we want all special education students to acquire?

Infusing visual and performing arts into curriculum added critical, whole child components, and supported interdisciplinary learning (Lorimer, 2009), while quality arts programs contributed to the intellectual, physical, and emotional well-being of children (Nelson, 2009). In some programs, visiting artists helped teachers integrate the arts into all curriculum areas (Morris, 2009; Sloan, 2009), while in other programs, teachers reinvented their own practice as a result of daylong workshops (Amorino, 2008; Sloan, 2009). In one program, working artists taught in a community based classroom, where students demonstrated confidence and competence. The students were reengaged when previously their teachers had voiced few positive expectations for them (Thomas 2007).

As long ago as 1987, Ernest Boyer, a former United States Commissioner of Education and President of the Carnegie Foundation, argued that the arts stimulated the intellect and enhanced the human spirit. Development of these two characteristics is sorely needed by our special education population. Integrating art with content connects academic work to students' own experiences and feelings. Furthermore, students experienced a sense of accomplishment, especially when they worked with local artists (Rankin & Redmond, 2006) and they boosted their self-confidence (Compton 2008). At the Boston Arts Academy, for example, where 13% of the students have a learning disability, 95% of the diverse, majority lower socio-economic (SES) and English Language Learner (ELL) population received college acceptances (Nathan 2008).

Balkin (2009) indicated that music energizes the language arts, social studies, math, and science curricula through teamwork between classroom teachers and music specialists and Southgate's study (2009) confirmed this correlation for reading and math, as did Piro and Ortiz (2009) in terms of vocabulary and verbal sequencing. Olshansky (2009) found that by publishing a book of original paintings and letters about one of their ancestor's journeys to America, some third graders learned about immigration. Some ELLS developed their poetry writing through discussing journeys and interactions with visual art (Reilly, 2008). How valuable these experiences could be for our special education students.

Transformative, compelling educational experiences require both rational, intentional acts and anticipation, that is, the imaginative sensing of possibility. This is Dewey's aesthetic philosophy. Teachers develop these experiences when they emphasize students' non-rational faculties, use non-verbal communication, show –not tell, teach connotation, unfold an event, direct students to the future, encourage students to trust their feelings, and develop vocabulary that expresses sense and feeling (Wong 2007). How often do educators, do this? How many have tried to conduct problem solving conferences to stop student misbehavior or solve students' problems (Crowe, 2008)?

Greene (2008) stated that students "with behavioral challenges are not attention-seeking, manipulative, limit-testing, coercive, or unmotivated (p.160). What they lack are teachable thinking skills or they are victims of an unsolved problem. The arts can help them want to attend school, aim high, and improve their skills."

A Potential Solution

To attempt to remedy the teaching artists' beliefs about their ability to manage the special population with which they are dealing, the professors offered some suggestions to help the performers reach their special education students. A discipline and management self-assessment was distributed and completed by the artists. This survey dealt with preparation, use of time and space, and development of routines and relationships. The goal was learning how to engage students by presenting clear behavioral objectives demonstrated through appropriate learning experiences with suitable expectation levels. Following from this activity, the artists completed a semantic web where they identified

what they felt were the causes of discipline problems and inattentive behavior in their classrooms.

Discussion followed. The artists felt that they needed more classroom management training, and may have inappropriately assigned work that was too hard, too easy, or was a mismatch with the special education students' learning styles. Some artists felt that they were either boring or confusing the children. Thinking about it, they felt that they may have presented unclear standards, expectations, and consequences. The artists identified both value and culture clashes among the students and the children's sense of learned powerlessness. Additionally, the teaching artists felt the need for more information about students' special education characteristics. The performers identified some external physical causes of concern, such as, hungry students or overly hot or cold rooms. But, mostly, the artists realized that they needed to introduce an element of fun and stimulation into their teaching (Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008).

Using a PowerPoint presentation and handouts the professors discussed the characteristics of specific types of disabilities. They then emphasized the power of explicit instruction, enhancing content through guided note-taking, and the use of graphic organizers and mnemonics (Heward, 2009). To directly teach, the artists were reminded to explain how and why what they were doing was important, to state an objective in child friendly terms, and to explain and model the steps in a process. The performers needed to remember to walk the students through the activities, let the students practice, and give clear, immediate feedback. Additionally, the professors pointed out that downtime, delays, and distractions often lead to classroom problems. Therefore, the artists were encouraged to make quick transitions, anticipate problems, and always be overly prepared (Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008).

Teaching artists can plan varied activities in workable chunks, and make sure they have the students' attention before they begin by using special signs, such as, hand signals or the ringing of a chime. The artists should learn and use students' names through name tags or cards on their work areas, and model respectful language and actions. The performers can calmly confront inappropriate behavior, and use multi-modal learning activities. Positive humor, not sarcasm, is most effective, too, they were told. The teaching artists should talk less than their students and investigate their children's' background knowledge through warm-up activities on the current topic as they begin their tasks. Think-pair-share was suggested as some special education students prefer to talk with groups smaller than the whole class until they are comfortable with the topic. As performers the artists know about timing, projecting without raising their voices, and using dramatic pauses for effect. All of these skills are imperative in an inclusion classroom. (G: TA Guide, 2008; Lerner, 2009; Myers, 2009; PDK, 2008).

The Performing Arts Center encourages their teaching artists to observe classes and to hold pre-planning and planning sessions with special and general education teachers. Suggested classroom management tips to be emphasized at these meetings include asking if time outs are allowed for disruptive students and how the educators acquire the students' attention when they begin a new activity. The teaching artists were shown the

benefits of gearing their curriculum-linked, scaffolded activities to the students' special needs and were emboldened to give responsibility and recognition to students with serious challenges. The teaching artists were encouraged to collaborate with classroom teachers and aides as allies and partners, and focus on fostering positive student behavior. They were reminded that praise and support help keep the group moving, and usually result in accomplishment for all types of students.

Before concluding this in-service program, the professors wanted to leave the artists with more than just a memory of a productive in-service session and a book of hand-outs. So the seminar leaders distributed a survey that the artists could use with their classroom teachers when they visited different districts. To help the teaching artist plan productively for their special education students, the survey (see Appendix B for complete survey) requested such information as the disabilities of the students in the classroom, the roles of the aides in the classroom, and the rituals the teachers use to get the students' attention. As one teaching artists said in her post-session evaluation, "Teaching artists are perfect for children with special needs. We are not interested in paper and pencil tasks. We want to tap into the gifts these students possess. We can teach concepts that the students cannot get from textbooks or other typical school sources. We are the TEACHING artists!"

Conclusion

The goal of this school partnership program is to capitalize on the ability of the arts to foster cognitive skills and improve academic achievement across the curriculum for special and general education students. The program builds critical thinking and stimulates the perceptual abilities of learners. This aesthetic experience can transform special education students into more active learners who self-express their sometimes hidden potential. As another teaching artist stated, "We are all on the same page as to the importance of a differential learning experience to affect different types of student. The best way is not always the direct way." But the best way for many special needs students may be to experience the arts.

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Appendix A

Dear Teaching Artists,

On Thursday, 1/8/09, from noon - 3:00 PM, we will have the opportunity to discuss your classroom interests and concerns. So that we can focus our time and our activities in the most meaningful way for you, we would appreciate some direction. Please answer the questions below and return to Deborah Robbins by 12/10/08.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Roberta and Louisa

1. Would characteristics of different categories of classified students interest you?

Y_____N_____

If yes, classification category(ies)

2. Would classroom techniques interest you? Y_____N_____

3. Would adapting methods and materials interest you? Y_____N_____

4. What other topics interest you?

Appendix B

Dear Classroom Teacher,

To better serve your children, please supply me with the following information:

1. What are the categories of disabilities of the students in your class?

☐ Learning Disabled	☐ ADHD	☐ Emotionally Disturbed
☐ Autistic	☐ Speech Impaired	☐ Deaf
☐ Physically Disabled	☐ Health Impaired	☐ Multiply Disabled
☐ Traumatic Brain Injured	☐	☐ Blind
☐	☐	☐
2. What is (are) the role(s) of the aide(s) in your classroom?
3. Where are special education students seated?

☐ randomly integrated	☐ back of room	☐ in their own group
☐ front of room	☐ isolated	☐
4. What is the physical layout of your classroom?

☐ rows	☐ horseshoe	☐ activity center _____
☐ tables	☐ groups of desks	☐
☐	☐	☐
5. What ritual do you use to get your students' attention (focus)?

☐ lights	☐ hand signal	☐ keywords/phrase
☐ percussive sound	☐ clappers	☐
☐	☐	☐ _____
6. Will you supply student name tags?

☐ Yes	☐ NO
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☐ Thank you!

_____, your Teaching Artist

A Multi-Faceted Approach to Successful Transition for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Dr. Russell G. Dubberly

Abstract

This report summarizes the multi-faceted, dynamic instructional model implemented to increase positive transition outcomes for high school students with intellectual disabilities. This report is based on the programmatic methods implemented within a secondary-level school in an urban setting. This pedagogical model facilitates the use of self-determination training, functional academics, positive behavioral strategies, and normalization theory to promote community access, employment, and increased social opportunities. The various instructional methods used are dependent upon each other and require a team of educators to work collaboratively toward the common goal of students successfully transitioning from high school to adult living.

A Multi-Faceted, Dynamic Instructional Model to Promote Positive Transition Outcomes for High School Students with Intellectual Disabilities

The following is a review of the instructional model implemented in a high school setting to promote successful student transition from school to adult living. The selected school serves students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities. The pedagogical model is multi-faceted and has various modalities that are dependent on each other for programmatic success. Strategies such as community-based instruction, self-determination skills, and positive behavioral strategies, along with direct instruction reading, and a focus on functional math are implemented to increase students' success. Student success is measured by positive transition outcomes. (i.e. high school graduation and access into adult settings). Students may transition to a variety of settings to be considered successful, based on their personal goals and the expectations of family members.

Many students with disabilities are now included in general education settings. Many employers now hire people with disabilities as well. Although these positive changes are in effect, more still needs to be done to ensure successful transitions from high school to employment and independent living. Taylor (2004) in conjunction with the National Organization on Disability, performed research across the United States and found the following:

Only 35 percent of people with disabilities reported being employed full or part time, compared to 78 percent of those who do not have disabilities. Three times as many live in poverty with annual household incomes below \$15,000 (26 percent versus 9 percent). People with disabilities remain twice as likely to drop out of high school (21 percent versus 10 percent). They are twice as likely to have

inadequate transportation (31 percent versus 13 percent), and a much higher percentage go without needed health care (18 percent versus 7 percent). People with disabilities are less likely to socialize, eat out, or attend religious services than their non-disabled counterparts. Life satisfaction for people with disabilities also trails, with only 34 percent saying they are very satisfied compared to 61 percent of those without disabilities. (§ 2)

These findings are indicators that more needs to be done to enable people with intellectual disabilities to enjoy a greater level of community success. Training within the community may be a particularly important learning activity for students with intellectual disabilities. Students with intellectual disabilities in particular have difficulties generalizing their learning to new settings (Alper & Ryndak, 1992; Cole & Meyer, 1991).

Self-determination strategies as a Component of Successful Transition

The school's mission focuses on increasing self-determination skills through a variety of pedagogical strategies. Wehmeyer (1996) defined self-determination as "acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference" (p. 22). Agran, Snow, and Swaner (1999) listed the following characteristics that encompass self-determination: (a) decision making, (b) problem solving, (c) choice making, (d) self-management, (e) self-awareness, (f) self-advocacy, and (g) goal setting. These characteristics are considered the defining constructs to help students increase employment and independent living after graduation. Self-determination skills are not constructs that are easily taught in a curriculum, void of access to community involvement. Students likely have a greater chance of learning to make adult decisions, if the skills are practiced in a real-world setting. Agran, Hughes, and Wehmeyer (2000) reported that students with disabilities who have enhanced levels of self-determination (decision making, goal setting, and self-advocacy) generally have more access to regular education classes, better post-school employment outcomes, and a greater level of independent living after exiting from high school. All of the self-determination skills (mentioned above) are implemented within the programmatic structure of community-based instruction and academic classrooms.

Students are coached with a constructivist approach to learn to make decisions concerning work preparation, daily routine work tasks, and basic problem-solving within community settings. Self-management is coached to encourage positive attitude, appropriate appearance, and good hygiene. Self-advocacy is an important characteristic for students with intellectual disabilities to gain understanding of their rights within various settings. Goal setting is a difficult skill for many young people and even more so for students with intellectual disabilities. Many of the above mentioned self-determination skills need to be present to select and meet post-graduation goals, such as maintaining employment or maintaining a place to live. Students can easily name goals, such as working at a retail store or living in an apartment, but often lack prior experiences and knowledge to obtain these goals. These skills must be taught in a structured and realistic way to ensure that these goals can eventually become a reality. Students with

intellectual disabilities often need step-by-step, sequential instruction to complete these post-secondary objectives.

Before seeking employment or independent living arrangements, a host of skills must be in place to ensure success. The self-determination and self-advocacy skills mentioned above are supplemented with functional math and functional reading skills. Functional reading is a fundamental element of the educational program. If a student with an intellectual disability can learn to read on a level that enables him or her to decipher simple directions at work, comprehend a bus schedule, or follow directions for cooking, a higher level of self-reliance can be realized. The high priority placed on functional reading arguably makes the reading teachers vital components in students' attainment of higher levels of independent functioning. Learning to read at higher levels opens doors of opportunity for employment, independent community travel, and self-management within the home. Reading is surely the gateway to many opportunities that may be missed without the attainment of this skill. A student who lacks functional reading can only aspire to work in lower wage jobs that do not require functional reading to complete tasks. A student who attains functional reading skills can aspire to higher paying and likely more enjoyable employment. Lacking functional reading skills often stonewalls advancement beyond entry-level, lower paying employment; if the person can find employment. Low literacy rates correlate with difficulty in attaining work. Guy (2005) identified adult literacy education as an important bridge to employment and cessation of welfare services.

Positive Behavioral Strategies as a Component of Successful Transition

Positive attitude, dependability, and consistency are the three most often desired work characteristics sought after by community employers throughout the last seven years participating with the school's community-based instruction program. These skills (Positive attitude, dependability, and consistency) are taught explicitly and reinforced daily to help students successfully maintain employment and natural supports. Positive behavioral strategies are reinforced in all academic and community settings. Teachers and staff work to teach students through role playing, social stories, and by their own examples. Positive behavioral strategies are implemented on a school-wide basis and encourage students to practice the three skills (above) within all components of their day. Behavioral support is correlated to success in school, work, and community access. For this reason, students are explicitly taught why they are making good behavioral choices and are provided the tools to make good decisions. Academic and vocational teachers (in the school) conduct pre-task training as an important part of student preparation. Teachers plan activities to allow students to practice interviewing for jobs, participate in travel training on public transportation, and learn social skills needed to secure and maintain employment and community access.

Functional Academics as a Component of Transition Success

Reading teachers in this program use two distinct, yet collaborative strategies to improve reading proficiency. First, decoding and comprehension are intensely taught through

direct instruction. This method has been shown (within this school setting) to increase students' (with intellectual disabilities) reading level during each year of participation. A large majority of the students who participated in the intense direct instruction program made positive gains in their decoding and comprehension skills.

The second component to functional reading is geared toward decoding and comprehending community access words. The constructivist approach is once again applied to the reading strategy. Students learn functional vocabulary that correlates with their vocational interests, transportation needs, social interests, and aspirations for independent living. A student who aspires to work in a restaurant needs to become proficient with reading words directly related to the environment. This idea drives the importance placed on what is primarily taught. Of course, there are many words that share commonality between many community settings. Words used in danger signs, transportation signs, and words used to gain basic medical or community access are reinforced with all students.

Functional math also plays a vital role in preparing a young person with a disability for actively participating in the community. A person who learns to make purchases, count change, and manage personal finances has a significantly higher level of independence over a person who lacks these skills. Time is another important consideration for employment and social activities. Teaching a student to use a watch or timer to manage breaks on the job creates a level of independence in the work setting. A person who knows how to set an alarm to wake in the morning, understands the time needed to dress, and the time needed for transportation to work enjoys a higher level of independence than one who lacks these skills. This reasoning is the logic behind teachers creating a priority for students to learn math functionality to support independent living and employment.

Normalization Theory as a Component of Successful Transition

Normalization theory is a guiding pedagogical principle used in developing transition strategies for these high school students with intellectual disabilities. Normalization implies, "as much as possible, the use of culturally valued means in order to enable, establish, and/or maintain valued social roles for people" (Wolfensberger & Tullman, 1982, p. 131). This theory elucidates constructs that are pertinent to building social networks within the community as well as maintaining relationships with peers in a workplace setting. Normalization theory concludes that when a person's social role is appreciated within a setting, other desirable outcomes will be "accorded that person within the resources and norms of his or her society" (Wolfensberger & Tullman, p. 131). One's consideration as a valued and equal part of a community setting is a mandatory premise to equal treatment, respect, and adequate access to social opportunities. When a person is devalued to a position less than others in a setting, the person may not have access to increased job responsibilities, social opportunities, and managerial respect.

A focus of community-based instruction is placed on normalizing the student within preferred community settings. This premise of normalization is considered as a fundamental component when building natural supports within a community setting.

Building natural supports at times seems somewhat short-sided by building supports based on employees currently within the person's (with a disability) immediate environment. People are often transient in their employment and especially within jobs that are entry level and may not offer benefits. One can argue that the person with a disability may be set up for failure when coached to become too dependent on specific coworkers currently working in the business. This program endeavors to teach students with a disability social skills, community survival skills, and employability skills to gain functional independence, with less need for direct supports. This instructional method utilizes the theory of normalization and offers the person the dignity of risk (as coined by Persky, 1972) afforded to non-disabled peers. Persky suggested that people with disabilities should be free to live their lives without undue burden and experience the "dignity of risk" (p. 199) that drives self-determination and autonomous behavior. The dignity of risk does not mean leave people with disabilities to their fate, but rather asserts support for the person with a disability to make decisions and decide his or her plan of action (to the fullest extent possible). This requires a spectrum of supports, but when applied in balance with the person's needs, can create an environment that includes the person as a valued and contributing member of society.

Conclusion

In summation, it is recommended that secondary-level schools develop a strategic plan of action that incorporates functional reading and math, along with community-based instruction that addresses community access and employability. These components work concomitantly to build skills needed for securing and maintaining employment, living independently, and enjoying equal status and dignity within preferred settings.

Arguably, many young people with intellectual disabilities need support to function proficiently within community settings. Teachers and caregivers must advocate for the rights of young people with intellectual disabilities. A well thought out transition plan accompanied with a solid foundation of functional academic skills and community experiences likely will create an avenue to higher levels of employment, life satisfaction, and self-worth.

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Appendix A

Curricular Materials Used in this Program: Standing Up for Me, Dare to Dream for Adults, Life Centered Career Education, Brigance Transition Skills Inventory, [Brigance Diagnostic Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills, Revised, 1999](#), SRA Direct Instruction Reading curricula (various levels), Job Talk.

High School Teacher Perceptions of the Student Assistance Team Process

**Dr. Jeff Stoehr
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Abstract

The Student Assistance Team Process provides a framework of accommodations, interventions, and instructional strategies tailored to the specific needs of a student with behavioral or academic problems. This research study, taking place at six public high schools in a Midwestern school district, details teachers' perceptions of the SAT Process and its effectiveness. While many teachers were mostly satisfied with the SAT Process, they also felt the process could be improved, particularly with regard to follow-up and teacher involvement. Of greatest concern is the finding that the majority of teachers feel that the SAT Process is only helpful some of the time. Given classroom teachers' important role in ensuring that at-risk students succeed, these results should be taken into consideration when planning programs to assist at-risk students. The SAT Process has the potential to be a valuable intervention program for at-risk students, but changes are needed to realize this potential.

High School Teacher Perceptions of the Student Assistance Team Process

Accountability and statistical data have become the hallmarks of today's educational environment. Students must meet an increasing number of standards, and schools must establish procedures and programs to help students meet these expectations. One such procedure is the Student Assistance Team (SAT) Process. As a part of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, schools are required to create a process targeted toward students whose academic performance and/or classroom behavior is hindering their academic progress. The Student Assistance Team Process provides a philosophy and framework for various members of the school staff who then use discussion, problem solving, reviews of available data, and/or development of intervention strategies to assist the student.

When a student appears to be having difficulty in the classroom, teachers should make their own day-to-day adjustments in the student's learning environment. If their efforts are not successful, the teacher can refer the student to the SAT Process. The number of students entering high school who need assistance and specific instructional strategies is increasing. In the Midwestern school district examined in this study, the number of students referred to the SAT Process tripled from 1999 to 2009.

The Student Assistance Team varies according to the school and the students' needs. The individuals on the team might include any or all of the following: the student, his/her teachers, parents, administrators, the school psychologist, the school nurse, a counselor, school therapists, and any other persons (ex., a private therapist or social worker/agency)

the parents wish to be involved in the development of a student plan. Through a collaborative process, this team recommends academic and/or behavioral accommodations, interventions, and strategies that can be implemented by classroom teachers in the hopes of helping the student succeed.

The SAT Process is grounded in the widely-held belief that accommodations, interventions, and instructional strategies tailored to a student's specific needs will help that student become more academically and behaviorally successful. This study was intended to provide information about teachers' perceptions of the SAT Process and its effectiveness. Collecting these perceptions will help Student Assistance Team members and school administrators modify the SAT Process to better assist at-risk students.

Review of Literature

There is a substantial amount of literature focusing on the factors influencing student failure, as well as techniques that can be used to address it. Ketterman-Brockett (1996) found the greatest predictor of future school performance was past school performance. It is clear that many students fail early in school and continue this pattern throughout their school career. Schools must be flexible institutions that change to facilitate the development of individual students rather than expecting the student to change to fit the traditional school system.

Research by Michie (2003) showed that principals felt positively about the impact of reforms and interventions. Three out of four principals stated that reforms resulted in improved student learning, academic atmosphere, student and teacher motivation, and school resources. On the other hand, principals were less enthusiastic about reforms and interventions meeting the needs of at-risk students. These students pose a particular challenge and need specific interventions. Therefore, some studies have focused specifically on the diverse needs of children who are at risk for failure. Stormont, Espinosa, Knipping, and McCathren (2003) found that establishing relationships, addressing challenging behaviors, and supporting language development increased the achievement of at-risk children, especially those in poverty. These three approaches were used with failing students and 82% of the students raised their grades to passing levels. Anderson (1997) found that ability, quality of schooling, student motivation, and academic coursework were important predictors of academic success for at-risk high school students. The most powerful factors influencing student achievement were individual ability and completion of academic coursework.

Studies have shown that over-generalized instruction does not help at-risk students with specific needs. In studying the development of early literacy skills and oral reading fluency, Kamps et al. (2003) found that schools that do not make specific adjustments for individual students' needs – such as a “one size fits all” school administrative policy, whole-class instruction, and overly large groups – had higher rates of failure than would otherwise be attained. Instead, research recommends isolating problematic behaviors and creating a customized, individualized plan to address each behavior. Fad and Patton (2005) used functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention plans to address

negative student behaviors. Their method led to a dramatic decrease in negative behavior, with a subsequent increase in student achievement.

Additionally, a study by Lewis (2000) emphasized the importance of giving teachers plenty of information and training regarding the problems their at-risk students faced. The study found that general education teachers generally had a lack of knowledge of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and were not trained in managing students with AD/HD in their classrooms. They were also less capable and therefore less willing to make appropriate accommodations for these students. Teachers with more knowledge of AD/HD were more willing to make accommodations for students with the disorder.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine regular education classroom teacher perceptions of the SAT Process.

Research and Methodology

The overarching question for the research study was: Do regular education high school classroom teachers perceive the SAT Process as beneficial in helping students?

The sub-questions for this study were:

1. What are the perceptions of regular education high school classroom teachers about the SAT Process (Steps 1-4), the pre-referral and identification of a student to the process?
2. What are the perceptions of regular education high school classroom teachers about the SAT Process (Step 5), the team meeting?
3. What are the perceptions of regular education high school classroom teachers about the SAT Process (Options 1-8), the strategies, accommodations, interventions, and results?

This research study took place at six public high schools in a Midwestern school district. Each high school was composed of grades 9 through 12 and ranged in student population from 1,450 students to 1,900 students. All of the high schools used the same SAT Process. For these schools, the process involved teachers, school psychologists, administrators, counselors, school nurses, school social workers, behavior therapists, education coordinators, attendance coordinators, students, and parents. The sample for this study was 579 regular education high school teachers.

A cross-sectional web-based survey with 34 questions was used to collect data. The survey examined teachers' current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices (teachers' actual behaviors). Teachers received the survey through their district e-mail account. Teachers were asked to rate the frequency of 23 items' occurrence according to the following scale: "All of the time," "Most of the time," "Some of the time," "Little of the time," and "None of the time." One question asked teachers to choose between an "Academic concern" or "Behavior concern." Four survey questions asked teachers to choose between numerical options: number of students (from "No Students" to "10 or

more students,” in intervals of three), number of meetings (from “0-3 meetings” to “20 or more meetings,” in intervals of four), days (from “0-10 days” to “51-60 days,” in ten-day intervals), or minutes (from “0-30 minutes” to “More than 90 minutes,” in 30-minute intervals). Six questions were open-ended. Two-hundred and forty-seven teachers (43%) responded to the survey, and 157 (27%) completed the entire survey.

Results

Demographic data revealed that 65.79% of survey respondents were female and 34.21% were male. The respondents who participated were primarily Caucasian (93.88%), as are the teachers assigned to students in this Midwestern district. Respondents were also placed in four age groups: 20-30 years old (13.25%), 31-40 years old (28.48%), 41-50 years old (24.50%), and 51 and over (33.77%). Each grade (9-12) was represented in the data, as well as a variety of subjects, including English, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Language, Business, Fine Arts, and Physical Education.

Over the past year, 39.01% of the teachers had not made any referrals to the SAT Process. The highest number of survey respondents (47.80%) had referred 1-3 students, and only 13.19% of teachers had referred 4-10 students to the SAT Process. The majority of teachers (66.21%) attended less than three SAT meetings in a school year. A substantial minority (27.59%), however, typically attended four to seven SAT meetings.

Academic concerns were the most common reason students were referred to the SAT Process (60%), with behavioral concerns (40%) as the other reason for referral. Frequent academic concerns included failing grades, lack of work, and low achievement. Common behavioral concerns included acting out in class, decreased attendance, atypical behaviors, and lack of focus. When teachers were asked if they had made any adjustments to the curriculum based on the student’s needs prior to referring students to the SAT Process, 28.98% of teachers responded that they made adjustments “all of the time,” 40% made adjustments “most of the time,” while 23.30% made adjustments some of the time. On the other hand, 6.82% of the participants made little or no adjustments. Most of these modifications were related to academic concerns – no behavioral adjustments were reported prior to reporting a student to the SAT Process.

Some teachers had doubts that their prior efforts to help the student were valued by the Student Assistance Team. Although the majority (67.66%) thought their work was valued “all” or “most of the time,” 19.76% thought their work was valued only “some of the time,” and 12.58% thought their initial work was given little to no value. Ninth grade teachers perceived their work to be valued less than did eleventh grade teachers – a significant difference. Another significant difference was found between teachers who were under and over 41 years old. Younger teachers perceived their work to be less-valued than did older teachers. Similarly, teachers with fewer years of experience had a significantly lower perception of how their work was valued than did teachers with more than ten years of experience.

Some teachers were also critical of the SAT Process itself. Over 26% of teachers estimated that it took 21 to 40 days to get a SAT meeting scheduled after the initial referral, and 6.76% thought it took over 41 days – this group of participants indicated that the wait was too long and as a result the student was falling further behind. Furthermore, over 20% of teachers felt that the time taken between the initial referral and the first SAT meeting was inappropriate and causing the student more failure. On average, teachers with six to ten years of experience felt the amount of waiting time for the first SAT meeting to be less appropriate than did teachers with over ten years of experience – a significant difference. When teachers were asked what changes needed to be made to the pre-referral process, the highest number of responses related to cutting down the amount of time between the referral and the first meeting. Additionally, teachers also felt that more communication between the Student Assistance Team and the student's teachers were necessary.

There appeared to be a lack of follow-up within the SAT Program. The highest number of teachers (33.08%) felt that the Student Assistance Team only reconvened to determine if the student plan was working effectively “little of the time.” When asked about follow-up by an administrator, the highest number of teachers (36.30%) indicated that an administrator followed up with them only “little of the time,” followed by more than a third of teachers (34.07%) who stated there was no follow-up at all. Younger teachers felt there was significantly less follow-up by administrators than did teachers over 40 years old. Similarly, teachers with six to ten years of experience felt there was significantly less follow-up by administrators than did teachers with over 21 years of experience. The majority of teachers (54.35%) also indicated that their involvement and participation in the SAT Process was never discussed in their teacher evaluation. Another 26.81% felt their involvement was discussed during evaluations only “little of the time.” On the other hand, teachers in their first year agreed that the Student Assistance Team reconvened to a significantly greater extent than did teachers with six to ten years of experience. It is very likely, however, that these first-year teachers have had fewer SAT meetings.

Even so, many teachers felt that their administrators were supportive of the Student Assistance Team. The highest number of teachers (47.79%) indicated that their building administrators supported the SAT Process “most of the time.” However, a large number (31.62%) thought their administrators supported the process “all of the time.” Teachers with 6 to 10 years of experience felt that their administrators were significantly less supportive of the SAT Process compared to teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience.

One of the most important findings was the lack of confidence teachers had in the SAT Process's ability to help students become more academically successful. The majority of teachers (57.46%) felt students were more academically successful after the SAT Process only “some of the time.” Less than a third (30.60%) thought they were more successful “most of the time,” and a scant 1.49% thought the SAT Process always helped students become more academically successful. In addition, 10.45% felt the process helped students “little of the time.” A significant difference was found between teachers with 6 to ten years of experience and teachers with more than 21 years of experience in regards

to this issue. Teachers with less experience did not feel that the SAT Process generally helped students with academic problems.

The same trend was found in teachers' perceptions of student behavior following the SAT process, but these numbers were even starker. Most of the teachers (61.94%) thought the process helped improve students' behavior "some of the time." Only 19.40% thought the process helped student behavior "most of the time," and nearly the same number (17.91%) thought the process helped only "little of the time." Less than 1% of teachers thought the SAT Process helped student behavior "all of the time." Some teachers suggested that the Student Assistance Team cooperate more with the School Community Intervention Program (SCIP).

Overall, the majority of teachers (56.25%) said they were satisfied with the SAT Process "most of the time." The second highest number of teachers (23.19%) claimed to be satisfied with the process "some of the time." Additionally, over 80% of teachers felt the needs of the student had been identified at the end of a SAT meeting "most" or "some of the time" – less than 8% of teachers felt that student's needs were always identified by the end of a SAT meeting.

An open-ended survey question asked teachers what they thought should be changed about SAT meetings. The highest number of teachers (29%) felt that teachers needed to be invited to these meetings, and that the meetings should be scheduled such that teachers could attend them. They stated that after they referred the student to the SAT Process, they did not receive any follow-up. Four teachers (6%) thought there was too much "chit-chat" in meetings, with not enough focus on the "real" problem. Similarly, three teachers (4%) felt meetings needed to "just function to meet student needs." Twelve participants (18%) did not think anything needed to be changed.

Although many teachers identified similar concerns with the SAT Process, there was little consensus regarding the specific improvements that needed to be made. Thirteen teachers (18%) suggested increased communication and consistency, while ten teachers (14%) stated that all parties involved with the SAT Process needed to be included in SAT meetings and the development of a student plan. Three teachers (4%) pointed out that classroom issues can be indicative of a deeper problem external to school, and interventions should be developed to help students tackle these external problems as well. Other teachers recommended implementing more follow-up, spending less time between the initial referral and the implementation of the plan, creating different SAT teams for each grade level, making sure the SAT Process functioned as designed, developing alternative high schools, increasing consequences for behavioral problems, creating an easier referral process, or making parental involvement mandatory.

However, teachers also need to strengthen their commitment to the SAT Process. While 41.38% of teachers reported being asked to provide information "all of the time," only 23.40% actually provided this information "all of the time," and 7.09% indicated they did not provide information even if they were asked. Correspondingly, 36.30% of participants indicated that most teachers of the student in question were in attendance at

SAT meetings only “some of the time,” and almost 26% reported that most of the teachers were in attendance “little of the time.”

Implications

These results indicate that improvements to the SAT Process need to be made. Schools should make sure that students referred to the SAT Process actually begin the SAT Process promptly. According to Ketterman-Brockett (1996), the greatest predictor of future school performance was past school performance. Therefore students who fall behind are in danger of falling further behind. Almost a third of the teachers in this study reported that it took over 20 days to hold a meeting after the initial referral to the SAT Process was made, and the most common recommendation suggested to improve the pre-referral process was cutting down on this time. Guidelines should be put in place to establish a time frame for each step of the SAT Process as well as the student plan. A week is recommended for setting up the initial meeting. If necessary, a school psychologist should evaluate the student within 30 days instead of 60.

Communication between the Student Assistance Team, the administration, and classroom teachers needs to be enhanced to ensure that the SAT Process is successful for all students. Many teachers felt that their previous efforts with the student that had been referred were not appreciated by the rest of the Student Assistance Team. Teachers expressed a strong desire to attend all meetings and wanted them to be scheduled at a convenient time for them, but some teachers were not kept informed of SAT meetings, and as a result could not attend and give their input. It is vital that all members of the SAT are active participants in the process. Classroom teachers in particular are crucial to the success of these students, as they are responsible for implementing most or all of the student plan.

Follow-up is an important part of any improvement plan, and the SAT Process needs to put greater emphasis on monitoring the success of the plan’s implementation. Less than 9% of the teachers in this study reported that their Student Assistance Team reconvened all the time to discuss the progress of the plan to heighten the possibility of success. Schools need to prepare for the possibility that some students’ problems may need multiple meetings. Administrators need to follow-up with teachers to ensure that the plan is being implemented successfully. They should also make teachers’ participation in and commitment to the SAT Process part of their teaching evaluation, underlining the importance of the SAT Process.

Additionally, retaining and encouraging the “new generation” of teachers must be a priority. Younger teachers and teachers with fewer years of experience (usually two to ten years) often provided responses that were significantly lower than those given by older teachers and teachers with over 20 years of experience. They felt less appreciated by the Student Assistance Team, thought the process lacked administrative support and follow-up, and did not think the process helped the students with their academic problems. Continuous staff development must be provided, particularly with regard to the SAT Process, including the pre-referral process, meetings, and interventions.

This study should be replicated by this school district in the future, possibly targeting the younger teachers who expressed the most doubts about the implementation of the SAT Process. Additional research could compare students' actual academic or behavioral gains to teachers' perceptions of their academic or behavioral gains.

Conclusion

The challenge of school improvement has emphasized the importance of ensuring that at-risk children receive the help they need to succeed academically. One program used by schools is the Student Assistance Team Process. An examination of the SAT Process in a Midwestern school district revealed that while many teachers were mostly satisfied with the SAT Process and happy with the level of administrative support they received, teachers also felt the process could be improved upon. Common recommendations were cutting down on the time between the initial referral of the student and the first meeting of the Student Assistance Team, maintaining more open communication with teachers – particularly with regard to SAT meeting notifications – and making sure that meetings stay focused on the development of the student plan. The survey results also showed that schools are lacking in their follow-up of the SAT Process and that younger and less experienced teachers are more skeptical of their school's SAT Process than their older and more experienced peers. Of greatest concern is the finding that the majority of teachers feel that the SAT Process is only helpful to students with academic and behavioral problems some of the time. The SAT Process has the potential to be a valuable intervention program for at-risk students, but changes need to be made in order to realize this potential.

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A Review of Research on the Educational Benefits of the Inclusive Model of Education for Special Education Students

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Abstract

The practice of inclusion is not a new idea to the educational setting; it is a newer term. Before No Child Left Behind, during the 1970s students with disabilities were mainstreamed into the general education population under Public Law 94-142. Public law 94-142, which was renamed to Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA), required students with disabilities to be educated with their non disabled peers as much as possible. Additionally, IDEA requires that a continuum of placement options be available to meet the needs of students with disabilities. This has not changed with the reauthorization of IDEA2004, however now students with disabilities must be included in statewide assessment. With this addition to the law, schools are paying more attention to their students with disability populations, thus the emergence of full inclusion. The rationale for inclusion has never rested on research findings alone, but on principle (Hines 2001). Proponents insist that the integration of students with disabilities are inherently right, compared often to the same right to racial integration (Hines, 2001).

The primary focus of this article is to review the research on the educational benefits of the inclusive model of education for students with disabilities. The term inclusion or responsible inclusion is a term used to identify the movement to provide service to students with disabilities in the general education setting. Inclusion is usually considered the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. In this article I will discuss the history of special education, the different services options for educating students with disabilities and the benefits associated with inclusion, as well as the opposing arguments for inclusion.

A Review of Research on the Educational Benefits of the Inclusive Model of Education for Special Education Students

History

Before the federal legislation passed in the 1970's, programs for students with disabilities were minimal and resources for parents were private educational programs. Parents paid for educational services out of their own resources (Smith, Polloway, Patton & Dowdy, 2006). Since the 70's services for students with Disabilities changed allowing more appropriate services to be provided by schools. These changes were due in part to legislation, parental advocacy and litigation and funding by the federal government.

In the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education court case, the United States Supreme Court deemed "Segregation solely because of a person's unalterable characteristics (e.g., race, or disability) was unconstitutional (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers as cited in Smith et. al.)."

Parents of students of disabilities used this civil rights law to advocate for legislation that would help meet the needs for their children. In 1975 PL 94-142, the most important legislation for students with disabilities was passed and later implemented in 1978. Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act), states in order to receive federal funds, states must develop and implement policies that assure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities. This law also provided that handicapped children and adults ages 3-21 be educated in the "least restrictive environment" to the maximum extent appropriate. This meant that students with disabilities were to be educated with children who are not handicapped and that special class, separate schools or other removal of children from their regular educational environment occurred only when the severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes could be achieved.

Since 1975, PL94-142 has been reauthorized by congress several times and changes implemented, but the foundation of the law has remained intact. In 1986, the reauthorization mandated services for children with disabilities ages 3-5. In 1990, the name was changed from PL 94-142 to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In the reauthorization the word handicapped was replaced with disability, two new categories of disabilities were added, Autism and TBI, and required school to develop transition planning for students at age 16. The most recent reauthorization was in 2004. IDEA 2004 had several new key components, however the most important component related to state assessments and Child Find. IDEA 2004 mandated that students with disabilities be included in statewide assessment with appropriate accommodations and the development of an alternative assessment for students who cannot participate in district and statewide assessments. It also requires schools to seek out students with disabilities, homeless children and migrant children who may qualify for special education.

Additional components included:

- (1) Least Restrictive Environment- Children with disabilities are educated with non disabled children as much as possible.
- (2) Individualized Education Program- All children served in special education must have an individualized education program (IEP).
- (3) Due-Process rights- Children and their parents must be involved in decisions about special education.
- (4) Due- Process hearing- Parents and schools can request an impartial hearing if there is a conflict over special education services.
- (5) Nondiscriminatory assessment- Students must be given a comprehensive assessment that is nondiscriminatory in nature.
- (6) Related services- Schools must provide related services, such as physical therapy, counseling, and transportation, if needed.
- (7) Free appropriate public education-The primary requirement of IDEA is the provision of a free appropriate public education to all school age children with disabilities.
- (8) Mediation/Resolution-Parents have a right, if they choose, to mediation or a resolution session to resolve differences with the school. Using mediation should not deny or delay a parent's request for a due-process hearing.
- (9) Transfer of rights-When the students reaches the age of majority, as defined by the state, the school shall notify both the parents and the student

and transfer all rights of the parents to the child. (10) Discipline- A child with a disability cannot be expelled or suspended for 10 or more cumulative days in a school year without a manifest determination as to whether the child's disability is related to the inappropriate behavior. (11) Transition-Transition planning and programming must begin when students with disabilities reach age 16. (Smith et.al p.13)

Service Options

The changes for services for students with disabilities evolved in three phases: relative isolation, integration and inclusion. The relative isolation phase consisted of students being denied access to public schools or permitted only to attend in isolated settings. This phase in education was the norm before 1970. The integration phase, which started in the mid 70's included mainstreaming students with disabilities in the general education programs when appropriate primarily for socialization. In the mid 1980's, the inclusion phase began. This phase also placed students with disabilities in the general education environment, but unlike the integration phase, the inclusion phase assumed that these students belonged in the general education setting, for empowerment, self determination, and to better prepare students for the highest degree of independence possible (Polloway, Patton, & Smith, 1996).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that a continuum of placement options be available to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The law also requires that:

"to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities ... are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be attained satisfactorily. IDEA Sec. 612 (5) (B)."

The continuum of placement option is a range of placements, from institutions to full time education in the general education environment. Traditionally students with disabilities were educated in specialized classrooms with teachers trained to give specialized instruction for mental retardation, learning disabilities or some other disability. This service model was known as self contained and was the dominant service model of education up until the 1970's. With the passing of PL94-142, and the growing awareness of the ranges in disabilities, the self contained model of educating students with disabilities was criticized and did not provide students with the opportunity to interact with nondisabled peers. As a result of the scrutiny by parents and professional, the resource room model became the next model. The resource model of education, provided specialized instruction in a separate classroom, however the students did not spend the entire day in that room. Students, who used the resource room, would receive special assistance in deficit areas and spend part of the day with nondisabled peers in general education classes.

The term Full inclusion means all students with disabilities, regardless of the severity of the disability, be included full time in general education classes (Smith, 2006). The idea that all students be educated in the general education classes was met with opposition, Kavale & Forness, 2000, (as cited in Smith, 2006) stated “in advocating this approach, there would be no need for a continuum of placement options for students, since the least restrictive environment would always be the general education classrooms for all students (p. 23). Thompkins, & Deloney, 1995 contends, Inclusion is the move to educate all children, to the greatest possible extent, together in a regular classroom setting. It differs from the term full inclusion in that it also allows for alternatives other than the regular classroom when more restrictive alternatives are deemed to be more appropriate. According to Smith, (2006) inclusion means “(1) that every child should be included in a regular classroom to the optimum extent appropriate to the needs of that child while preserving the placements and services that special education can provide; (2) that the education of children with disabilities is viewed by all educators as a shared responsibility; (3) that there is a commitment to include students with disabilities in every facet of school; (4) that every child must have a place and be welcome in a regular classroom” (p. 24).

The National Association for State Boards of Education (NASBE) endorses the "full inclusion" of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. In a report released in 1992, NASBE suggest states should revise teacher-licensure and certification rules so that new teachers would be prepared to teach children with disabilities as well as those without disabilities. It also recommended training programs to help special educators and regular educators adapt to collaborating in the classroom.

Inclusion supporters have argued in favor of its benefits on social, philosophical grounds and academic gains. In addition, inclusion can better prepare students with disabilities for community living, and also assert that teachers' professional skills improve as a result of teaching in inclusive classrooms (Begeny & Martens, 2007). It has also been argued that successful inclusion helps typical students to develop more positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities, which ultimately increases their likelihood of establishing social principles based on equality and promoting a more harmonious society (Karagiannis et al., 1996b as cited in Begeny & Martens, 2007).

According to Lewis, (as cited in Thompkins & Deloney, 1995), students with disabilities in inclusive environments "improve in social interaction, language development, appropriate behavior, and self-esteem". Inclusion supporters also suggest cooperation between regular and special education in integrated settings tends to raise their own expectations for their students with disabilities, as well as student self-esteem and sense of belonging.

Thompkins & Deloney (1995) suggest the weaknesses of special education, as it currently is structured; the dual system of education and the issue of "labeling effects" on students with disabilities is enough reason for supporting inclusion. According to Lipsky & Gartner, as cited in Thompkins & Deloney 1995, the impact of such labeling, lowered

expectations, and poor self-esteems on school learning is significant. Stainback, Stainback, and Bunch (1989) suggest that schools have had to organize a separate system for their students with disabilities, which waste time, money and resources. They also contend with the National Association of State Boards of Education, 1992, that this dual system suggest that this dual system does not adequately prepare students with disabilities for the "real world," because the "real world" is not divided into "regular" and "special." In addition, limited interactions between those with disabilities and their non-disabled peers' further handicap special education students.

According to Tomko (1996):

“Through inclusive education children with disabilities remain on a path that leads to an adult life as a participating member of society... it increases their ability to achieve academic and physical growth to their potential, and it enhances their overall quality of life. Inclusive education teaches all children team work and how to interrelate and function together with others of different abilities. They learn to value diversity, see the ability of others to contribute, and it gives children a sense of unity.”

The benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities, according to Kids Together, (2009), include: (1) Friendships (2) Increased social initiations, relationships and networks (3) Peer role models for academic, social and behavior skills (4) Increased achievement of IEP goals (5) Greater access to general curriculum (6) Enhanced skill acquisition and generalization (7) Increased inclusion in future environments (8) Greater opportunities for interactions (9) Higher expectations (10) Increased school staff collaboration (11) Increased parent participation and (12) Families are more integrated into community. Smith et.al 2006, states the advantages of the inclusive model are ease in accessing the general curriculum, (Begeny and Martens, 2007) inclusion can result in academic and social gains, better preparation for community living, and an avoidance of the negative effects caused by exclusion, (Karagiannis et al., 1996 as cited in Begeny & Martens, 2007) “successful inclusion helps typical students to develop more positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities, which ultimately increases their likelihood of establishing social principles based on equality and promoting a more harmonious society” (p.1).

Hunt (2000) reports positive effects for both general and special education students at the elementary level, concluding that academic benefits for general education students include having additional special education staff in the classroom, providing small-group, individualized instruction, and assisting in the development of academic adaptations for all students who need them. Another study reporting perceptions of middle school students, their parents, and teachers indicated a shared belief that middle level students with mild disabilities included in the general classroom experienced (1) increased self-confidence, (2) camaraderie, (3) support of the teachers, and (4) higher expectations. The study also indicated that these students avoided low self-esteem that can result from placement in a special education setting (Ritter, Michel, & Irby, 1999). In a review of research on inclusion at both the elementary and secondary levels, the report showed that academic performance is equal to or better in inclusive settings for general education

students, including high achievers, and social performance also appeared to be enhanced because students have a better understanding of and more tolerance for student differences Salend and Duhaney (1999). In general, students with disabilities in inclusive settings have shown improvement in standardized tests, acquired social and communication skills previously undeveloped, shown increased interaction with peers, achieved more and higher-quality IEP goals, and are better prepared for post school experiences (Power-deFur & Orelove, 1997)

Not all studies on inclusion have been shown to be beneficial for students with disabilities or for nondisabled students. Some studies report positive social gains for students with disabilities in the regular classroom, while others report that students included have experienced isolation and frustration. The opponents of inclusion, particularly those opposed to a full inclusion model—have argued that (a) general education is not prepared for inclusion, and fully inclusive education cannot be accomplished due to its inherent complexities; (b) empirical evidence has not sufficiently validated the effectiveness of inclusion; (c) students with disabilities need more intensive interventions than can be provided in a general education classroom; and (d) school wide inclusive education attitudes, adaptations, and accommodations for students with disabilities must be in place and highly supported by teachers and administrators before an inclusion model has a strong chance of success (see, e.g., Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Kauffman, 1993, 1999; Stainback & Stainback, 1996). Lieberman, 1992 as cited in Thompkins & Deloney 1995) points out that many advocates (including parents) for those with learning disabilities have significant concerns about the move toward inclusion, stemming from the fact that they have had to fight long and hard for appropriate services and programs for their children. In addition, they contend that students with learning disabilities do not progress academically without individualized attention to their educational needs and these services work when a specialized teacher works with these students individually or in small groups, usually in a resource room setting.

Based on a survey from 120 teachers from six middle schools in one Colorado school district Tiner (1995) found that teachers were most concerned with ensuring that all students have an opportunity to learn and voiced a concern that too much time was spent on special students and resulted in time taken away from others in the classroom. According to Staub and Peck (1995), studies conducted with control groups to compare progress of children who are not disabled in inclusive classrooms and with those in classrooms that do not include students with disabilities, no significant differences were found between the two groups of students.

Among the professionals and parents who oppose the inclusion model, (Smith et. al) some of their concerns are:

- (1) General educators have not been involved sufficiently and are not likely to support the model.
- (2) General educators as well as special educators do not have the collaboration skills necessary to make inclusion successful.
- (3) There are limited empirical data to support the efforts,
- (4) Full inclusion of students with

disabilities into general education classrooms may take away from students without disabilities and lessen their quality of education. (5) Current funding, teaching training, and certification are based on separate educational systems. (6) Some students with disabilities do better when served in special education classes by special education teachers (p.25).

Although research can be found to support inclusion or disprove the benefits of inclusion, however, there are other obstacles for inclusion. According to Kochhar, West, & Taymans, 2000, (as cited in Hines 2001) the barriers to inclusion generally fall into three categories: organizational, attitudinal, and knowledge barriers.

Organizational barriers are related to the differences in ways schools and classes are taught, staffed, and managed, as well as scheduling the amount of time needed for collaborative planning. Attitudinal barriers involve the collaboration of teachers and a shift in control and sharing of a learning environment rather than having individual space. Also, educators have to be willing to accept new ideas about teaching, learning, and learning styles. Both general and special educators feel that knowledge barriers also exist in inclusive classrooms. In many cases, general educators do not feel that they have received the necessary training for working with students with special needs and special educators may feel under qualified if they are not content experts, especially at a middle or secondary school level.

Heyne's (n.d.) barriers to inclusion consist of four categories; attitudinal barriers, administrative barriers, architectural barriers and programmatic barriers. Attitudinal barriers may take the form of misconceptions, stereotypes, or labeling and staff may not understand the concept of inclusion and what it represents in terms of people's rights and opportunities. Administrative barriers involve agencies with the lack of outreach networks, staff trained in inclusive practices, adequate transportation, and funding for coordinated services and individual supports. Boards of directors and administrators may not understand inclusion well enough to support it and may also mistakenly presume that inclusion means complicated and expensive liability arrangements. Architectural barriers should never be used as an excuse to deny participation. It consist of curb cuts, ramps, automatic door openers, elevators, braille signage, telecommunication devices, and similar accommodations (or the lack thereof) send a message that people with disabilities are or are not welcome. Programmatic barriers involves serving people with varying abilities, and program staff may not have accurate information about disabilities nor experience teaching people with differing abilities. In addition the staff may not know how to provide inclusion supports such as individual needs assessments, environmental inventories, behavioral teaching techniques, adaptations, or specialized equipment.

Summary

There is research that can be found to support both views on inclusion. Opponents point to research showing negative effects of inclusion, often citing low self-esteem of students with disabilities in the general education setting and poor academic grades. For those

supporting inclusion, research exists that shows positive results for both special and general education students, including academic and social benefits.

Since all children in the United States are entitled to a free public education, teachers today must provide instruction and other educational services that meet the needs of a very diverse population. Classrooms that will successfully include students with disabilities are designed to welcome diversity and to address the individual needs of all students, whether they have a disability or not. If schools are to be effective in providing services for all students, than school personnel must address the needs of all students and have an understanding of the types of disabilities and services models. Inclusion should not be disregarded because of lack of funding, staff or preconceived ideas of its complexity. Inclusion should be based on the individual students' needs.

For the successful implementation of inclusion, schools and school districts should provide support at the administrative level and classroom level, by providing time for planning, time for training, and an overall commitment to provide support. With such legislation as IDEA, and parent advocacy groups, schools will have no choice in providing the inclusive model of education for students with disabilities.

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The Millennial Generation Special Education Teacher: Promise or Problem

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Abstract

Young Americans born between 1982 and 2002 (also known as members of the Millennial Generation) are now or soon will be beginning their careers in many professions, including special education. This article describes why Millennial Generation special education teachers are vital to the current and future development of the field. It also details commonly reported traits of these individuals that may have a positive or negative impact on their efforts to educate children with exceptionalities. Specific strategies for teacher educators, special education supervisors, co-workers, and other stakeholders are discussed as to how to best guide and support these teachers.

The Millennial Generation Special Education Teacher: Promise or Problem

Why Millennial Special Educators Make a Difference

According to the U.S. Department of Education, approximately six million, or one in ten, school age children receive special education services. However, the recruitment and retention of highly qualified special education teachers continues to be a severe and chronic problem for American public schools (Council for Exceptional Children, 2007). It is therefore critical that administrators understand the attrition problem and what they can do to best meet the unique needs of these educators. The purposes of this article are to address the potential strengths and needs of the youngest cohort of special education teachers, and to give administrators insight regarding how to support these individuals as they advance in the field.

The Millennial Generation (also known as Generation Y or Echo Boomers) are the approximately 76 million Americans born between 1982 and 2002 (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennials are currently starting their careers in many professions including special education. Their presence and contributions to the field will have a serious and long-reaching impact.

Fifty percent of all public school teachers in the United States are currently eligible for retirement; an estimated one-hundred thousand teachers are expected to step down by the 2010-2011 school year (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2009). Many additional mid-career teachers are advancing into administrative and other supervisory roles. It is therefore critical that teacher-educators, administrators, co-workers, and other stakeholders better understand the unique strengths and potential

challenges of those directly responsible for the current and future education of children with special needs.

Both Their Biggest Asset and Greatest Liability

One of the most important things to remember about Millennial special educators is that they are the first generation of teachers whom have all been born well after national special education laws were put into place in the 1970's. These individuals have never lived through a time when concepts such as "least restrictive environment", "free appropriate public education", and "individualized education plan" were not a standard part of the American public school system.

It is unclear whether this factor is more of an asset or liability in regards to Millennials' attitude, efforts, and commitment to the field of special education. On the positive side, as students, the Millennials have been regularly exposed to inclusion, co-teaching, differentiated instruction and many other strategies and programs used to fully integrate children with disabilities into the general education curriculum. As teachers, they may need substantially less motivation and convincing that such activities are valuable to schools and the students they serve.

An opposing point of view states that Millennials are incapable of fully appreciating the historical struggles, setbacks, and discrimination encountered by children with disabilities without having lived through it. It may be argued that the impact and significance of inclusion cannot be truly valued, unless an individual has witnessed the era of segregation and institutionalization before it. Further complications may arise if Millennials make assumptions that every professor, co-workers or administrators shares their perspective regarding what they consider the best placement and practices for students with disabilities.

Limitations

Before describing common Millennial attributes, it is vital to acknowledge the limitations of the discussion. In their book, *Millennials Go to College*, Howe and Strauss (2003) addressed this issue:

Every generation is full of all kinds of people. But each generation has a personality with core traits. Not all members of that generation will share those traits, and some may even personally rebel against them, but-like it or not-those core traits will define the world inhabited by every member of a generation.

Select Strengths of Millennial Special Education Teachers

Millennials have many traits considered positive and desirable by most members of society. Some traits may have a direct impact on the field of special education. The next section addresses three of these common traits: (a) appreciation for diversity, (b) mastery of technology, and (c) commitment to the group.

Appreciation of Diversity

Millennials are described as the most diverse generation in the history of the United States (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This is represented in the wide variety of cultures, ethnicities, and national origins amongst its members. Although previous “melting pot” generations have also been diverse, their differences were met with tolerance at best, and discrimination at worst.

Conversely, Millennials are known for their skills at embracing and celebrating the diversity of others. It is not hard to see how this trait would be of great value to a quality special education teacher. There are few more heterogeneous environments in the typical school than the special education classroom.

The accomplished teacher must know how to work with any number of physical disabilities, cognitive impediments, and behavioral challenges in the course of a day. A positive attitude and a sincere desire to accept the differences of others make this task much easier. Furthermore, comfort and ease with other cultures may help bridge the inherent sociological gap between the majority of special education teachers who are white females and the large percentage of her African-American male student counterparts (Nettles & Perna, 1997).

Mastery of Technology

It comes as no surprise to state that most Millennials fully embrace technology. After all, they shared a bassinet with the World Wide Web. They know how to best utilize technology to make their lives easier and more fulfilling. They have the potential to do the same for their students.

Instructional technology can vastly improve the academic lives of many children with special needs. However, there are perceived limitations on its successfulness. Research shows that one variable that influences the usefulness of an instructional technology is the technology comfort level of the instructor (Morris, 2002; Cuban, 2001). Millennials hold the potential to not only fully incorporate instructional technology into the classroom, but to also be actively involved in the creation and implementation of the tools of tomorrow.

Commitment to the Group

Millennials are described as being extremely team-oriented (Howe & Strauss, 2003). More than any past generation, they rely upon devices such as the internet, cell phones, and personal digital assistants in order to stay in close communication with family, friends and associates. They may have thousands of friends on Face Book or send up to the minute “tweets” on Twitter. They have been shaped in school by cooperative learning and group projects. Their Little Leagues and soccer teams shifted in emphasis from competition to teamwork. They understand and value commitment to the group.

Collaboration is an especially valuable and needed skill for special education teachers. They are regularly asked to contribute their expertise with other professionals as part of a multidisciplinary team. They must work with parents, professionals, and often the student herself as part of the IEP team. Other prominent special education practices such as response to intervention and co-teaching require teachers to utilize strong interpersonal skills. All of these activities may come much easier to those whom have an innate ability to “play nice with others.”

Select Challenges of Millennial Special Education Teachers

Not all news about the Millennials is positive. For example, a recent survey revealed that nearly a third of polled business recruiters described members of this generation as “poor performers” (Lawrence, 2008). Some of the specific traits may have a negative impact on special education. They include (a) praise hunger, (b) leading sheltered lives, and (c) perceived lack of job commitment.

Praise Hunger

Young adults have grown up in a culture with an immense amount of specific and immediate feedback. Parents, relatives, teachers, and other adults have showered them as children with substantial recognition and rewards. The downside of the shift in youth sports from a priority of competition to one of teamwork is that participation is valued over achievement. Critics feel that this “everyone gets a trophy” mentality may have severe negative repercussion as this generation enters the work world.

In a survey of 1000 Millennial employees, the majority of respondents desired “daily feedback from their supervisor” (Robert Half International, n.d.). Many school administrators might feel that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to provide feedback to every teacher on a daily basis.

Leading Sheltered Lives

Members of the Millennial Generation have often been perceived as being overly protected and sheltered. They were the babies referenced on the infamous “baby on board” car signs. In elementary school, they were D.A.R.E.-ed to “just say no”. They served as the precious cargo of “helicopter parents” who constantly floated nearby and swooped in at the slightest sign of academic or behavioral trouble.

Historically, children with disabilities have also been sheltered. In the past, society has made assumptions that many of these children were “too slow”, “too naughty”, or “too frail” to learn alongside their non-disabled peers. Times have changed, and modern special educators favor self advocacy, self-determination, and transition skills as means for people with disabilities to live their lives as independently as possible.

It is unclear what impact a Millennial teacher brought up in an environment of risk adversity and safety first might have on her students. Will she give students the “right to fail” or might she innately worry that these children should “play it safe” and take all the support, guidance, and charity that society may feel obligated to provide?

Perceived Lack of Job Commitment

Several books have been written on how to recruit and retain Millennials in the workplace (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009; Alsop, 2008; Tulgan, 2009; Marston, 2007). The literature mentions several challenges in regards to keeping young workers in their twenties. These challenges include their innate sense of “specialness” and “entitlement”, prioritizing their social lives over their work lives, and a perceived impatience with advancement and promotions. This final point is highlighted through a Robert Half International survey (n.d.) which found almost half of Millennial respondents expected to work no more than one to two years “paying their dues” in an entry level position.

If these factors are not met, it is possible that many Millennials will not hesitate to move on to another position, another worksite, or even another career. This would be especially detrimental to America’s schools. It is estimated to cost 7.3 billion dollars annually to recruit, hire, train, and retain our nation’s K-8 teachers (The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007). In addition to the enormous fiscal burden, the special education field would continue to be especially hit hard by turnover. Ninety-eight percent of the nation’s schools report a shortage of special education teachers (ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, 2001). If Millennials leave the field in large numbers, these problems will only be exacerbated.

Suggestions for Administrators

It is not enough to simply recognize common traits of Millennial special education teachers. Administrators should be proactive in how they deal with these individuals to ensure a more satisfying workplace for the adults and a more productive learning environment for the children. Some specific suggestions to meet this goal are discussed below.

Cater to their Strengths

There are many needs in schools that are a perfect fit for the strengths of this generation. For example, they might be called upon to lead an in-service regarding the latest in educational technology. Another strategy could be to utilize their affinity for group work through leadership roles in organizations such as the school social committee or the local parent-teachers organization. By catering to their strengths, Millennials may feel more personally invested in their schools and their jobs. This in turn, may lead to greater levels of professional satisfaction and commitment to the profession.

Recognize their Efforts.

It may not be feasible to provide the daily praise or feedback that Millennials desire, but it is important for them to know that their co-workers and supervisors understand and appreciate the job that they do. A brief personal email of encouragement after a challenging conference, or a handwritten note of praise after an observed lesson could often be extremely valuable to beginning teachers. Small gestures of recognition and appreciation allow these teachers (and others regardless of the generation) to feel as if their efforts make a difference and that they are valued.

Treat Them as Individuals

The most important piece of advice is to not be influenced by preconceived notions regarding Millennials. Making assumptions based on generalizations may lead to miscommunication, disappointment or distrust. Each teacher brings a distinct set of talents, needs, and experiences to their classroom.

Familiarity of the common characteristics of the Millennial Generation should not serve as some sort of “magical instructional manual” that explicitly explains “what makes these people tick.” Supervisors, must treat each new teacher as an individual rather than as an identical and interchangeable member of a strictly defined group. The field of special education has long implored people look beyond the label when it comes to children with disabilities. Should we not be expected to treat our teachers the same way?

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One-to-one in the Inclusive Classroom: The Perspectives of Paraeducators Who Support Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Abstract

In public schools nationwide, students categorized with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have traditionally been removed from the general education setting, where they were taught in isolation by special education personnel. More recently, research on the learning needs of students with ASD has suggested the importance of including them along side their peers. As a result, these students and their paraeducators have entered the classrooms of content area teachers. The context can create challenges for the paraeducator and their special education supervisor who has authority for their training and supervision. This study examined five paraeducators employed in a single high school as they enter general education classrooms to support the particular students they are assigned. Participants discussed the need to understand the full range of behavioral manifestations of autism as a starting point for their work. Once participants acknowledged their student's differences, however, they identified the instructional context their students needed in order to succeed in the inclusive classroom setting.

One-to-one in the Inclusive Classroom: The Perspectives of Paraeducators Who Support Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

"Should I follow him into the student bathroom?" I remember a perplexed Mr. Johnston asking at the end of a long school day.

"Or, should I just stand outside in the hallway and wait for him?"

He took a deep breath then exhaled. I was baffled by his confusion and paused a moment.

"Actually, Mr. Healy," he said, smiling awkwardly, "I don't know how comfortable I am with this bathroom situation. I think I'll just continue to wait for him in the hallway."

I nodded my head in agreement.

For Mr. Johnston, a one-to-one paraeducator, this was one of a host of challenges in his first week. As his supervisor, I remember a face that at that moment seemed stressed. The job, it appeared, was more than he expected.

Mr. Johnston's position had been created mid-year after a student diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) involved himself in a physical altercation with three of his peers. Following the fight, our school assembled the required Individualized Education Planning (IEP) Team, and we developed a behavioral modification plan. We agreed that an additional staff member would be required in order to fully implement our supports. I had provided Mr. Johnston a copy of the plan and explained it to him when he was hired. The school principal reinforced that one of his responsibilities necessitated "sticking to the elbow" of this student. And so the plan was implemented.

Now, in his first week on the job, he was adjusting to the demands of these responsibilities.

"Besides," Mr. Johnston continued, "he leaves every class to go to the bathroom. And he stays in there a long time."

The physical monitoring of this student was not the only demand Mr. Johnston faced. Earlier in the day I had received two e-mails from teachers indicating the need for Mr. Johnston to provide closer academic monitoring. One teacher suggested that Mr. Johnston record his lecture notes, take down nightly homework assignments, and quiz the student during study halls prior to tests. The other e-mail informed me that the student was failing her class and that this student would need additional support from Mr. Johnston in order to pass.

I found a blank student planner for Mr. Johnston and talked with him about supporting the student academically. Mr. Johnston looked skeptical.

"The kid's smart," he said. "But, he won't even talk with me. How's this going to happen?"

The following Monday Mr. Johnston called me from the guidance department. He was with his student and the counselor. I entered the counselor's office to find the student crying and repeating that he was a "zero" and a failure. He "wanted to die." Worried by the student's comments, the counselor stepped out of his office and contacted his parents. We held an emergency IEP meeting later that day to address the mounting concerns we had for this student.

What makes describing these moments difficult is the fact that I have had to coordinate services for students requiring one-to-one, paraeducator support in each of the last eight years. What I have found most challenging is that while my job description includes supervisory responsibilities, the demands of my job prevent me from giving Mr. Johnston and others the time and professional assistance they need. The imposing of an inclusion mandate has moved paraeducators from the special education setting and into the general education classroom. Yet, the supervising responsibilities of paraeducators remain with the special education teacher. Given the structural limitations of these situations, my support often turns on inferences made by general education teachers and administrators, and informal consultation time with paraeducators. This frustration is increased by the

lack of written job descriptions and clear definitions of responsibilities for the paraeducators at my school.

At present, I supervise four paraeducators among the eighteen at my high school. In my work with these four, including Mr. Johnston, I began to think about the demands these support personnel face as they work one-to-one with students in and outside the inclusive classroom setting. I grew particularly interested in the demands that six of the eighteen paraeducators in the high school face, namely one-to-one support of students diagnosed with ASD. To support these paraeducators, I realized the need to better understand their perspectives about work demands. I initiated a qualitative study framed by the following questions: What beliefs about instructing adolescents with ASD guide the teaching of these paraeducators? What experiences with content area staff assist these paraeducators in understanding expectations for their instruction? And, what particular instructional opportunities do these paraeducators perceive to be beneficial in supporting their student's learning?

Literature Review

The number of paraprofessionals entering general education classrooms in support of students with special needs has grown significantly. This increase is due in large part to federal legislation that mandates the “least restrictive environment” for special needs students (IDEA, 2004). The law recognizes the authority of licensed content area teachers to educate most students with special needs in a given curriculum (as opposed to personnel who instruct in pull-out settings). The use of additional personnel to support content area teachers is a second feature of federal legislation mandating inclusion. The law includes provisions requiring paraeducators to be adequately trained and supervised when they provide instruction to students (IDEA, 2004).

Pickett, Linkins, & Wallace (2003) estimate that there are over 1.2 million paraeducators employed in public and private schools and in early childhood education programs. The number of those serving students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in a one-to-one capacity is unknown. The majority of all paraprofessionals are women who enter the profession while raising their children because the work hours accommodate their home schedules (French, 1999a). According to French (1999a) the average age of paraeducators in the United States is forty. In a study examining paraeducator job retention in North Carolina, Tillery, Werts, Roark, & Harris (2003) found that conducive working conditions, appropriate scheduling, and opportunities to be helpful were among the reasons cited by those who stayed in their positions for greater than five years. Participants also reported that working with children was a reason for their retention. Other studies have found that paraeducators who are satisfied with their positions are those who have pride in what they do, know the importance of their work, and have strong connections to professional staff and students (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; French, 1999a; Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2001; Pickett, Linkins, & Wallace, 2003).

Some children with special needs require personal attention that would not otherwise be available to them without the introduction of one-to-one support personnel. Parents and

teachers alike have expressed that inclusion would not be possible if it were not for the paraeducator (French, 1999a). Ashbaker & Morgan (2001) found that rural schools are particularly dependent on paraprofessionals in carrying out the inclusionary needs of special education students because they often lack the monetary compensation to attract teachers who are considered highly qualified. While the needs of rural paraeducators are distinct, Ashbaker & Morgan (2001) indicate that the demands on paraeducators in all contexts have grown more complex as they transition from special education classrooms to inclusive instructional settings. This complexity is especially true given the specialized nature of working with a student with ASD.

Specialized techniques in meeting the individual needs of a student makes rendering a generalized description of the work carried out by paraeducators difficult. In a study examining the employment of paraeducators in Connecticut and Vermont, 47% of the participants reported that they had not received a written job description upon their hiring (Riggs & Mueller, 2001). In their work, Pickett, Vasa, & Steckelberg (1993) conceptualize a model for the effective utilization of paraeducators in the classroom. Foremost in their guidelines is the establishment of a written job description of the paraeducator. The description emphasizes the supervisory role of content area teachers during academic periods. The information outlined in the job description states that paraeducators are to implement instructional activities only after such activities are planned by the content area teacher. Teachers, the description continues, are to direct paraeducators during activities, and paraeducators are to provide observations to the teacher on the student's progress in meeting the stated objectives.

Ashbaker, Young, & Morgan (2001) surveyed 159 paraeducators from the United States, Canada, and England and found that 78% of paraeducators in the United States spent the greatest amount of their time instructing students. The bulk of this instruction was aimed at reading and math. When the researchers asked participants who was responsible for allocating the time to specific elements of instructional activities, 56% of the US participants reported that the teacher provided such focus. Canadian paraeducators, on the other hand, reported that teachers provide such focus 45% of the time. And, while US paraeducators reported joint decision-making with the teacher in some aspects of the instructional process, 74% reported spending a majority of their instructional time with a teacher present, whereas 58% of the Canadian and 68% of the English paraeducators worked a majority of their time with a teacher present (Ashbaker et. al., 2001). The variations among these percentages suggest that American paraeducators work more closely with their cooperating teachers when providing instruction to students.

A study of the supervision and management of paraeducators (Dover, 2002) found that clear delineations of responsibilities for general education and special education teachers were lacking. In fact, Dover (2002) found that slightly less than three-fourths of the 369 general and special education teacher respondents had no prior training in the supervision or management of paraeducators. Most teachers perceive supervision to be the role of an administrator. Dover (2002) reported that the respondents did not 'shy away' from supervisory tasks given this perception. The study found that general and special education teachers perform about the same number of supervisory tasks and that these

tasks often overlap. The researcher also identified 27 supervisory tasks and had respondents divide these tasks into an 'ideal' delineation between general and special education supervisors (Dover, 2002). A majority of participants indicated that an equal distribution of supervisory tasks would be an ideal arraignment in the supervision of paraeducators. Greater input by general and special education teachers as to the effective roles of paraeducators in the inclusive setting is one interpretation made of this finding (Dover, 2002).

Studies show that paraeducators believe working collaboratively with teachers is important to their practice (Ashbaker, Young, & Morgan, 2001; Carroll, 2001; Dover, 2002; Riggs & Mueller, 2001). In a recent study of the perceptions of paraeducators as to their roles and responsibilities, Patterson (2006) surveyed twenty-two paraeducators about their interactions with teachers. The data indicated that 59% of participants felt valued as a result of regular consultation time with content area teachers. Unfortunately, such collaboration is difficult to arrange. The lack of collaborative opportunities with content area teachers and special education supervisors is further complicated by the apprehension many paraeducators feel to initiate such meetings. According to Marks, Schrader, & Levine (1999):

[P]araeducators reported asking for ideas only when they were 'at a loss' for what to do academically. On a whole, paraeducators found themselves waiting for others to make educational decisions that never came, and, when faced with the need to provide instruction and 'on-the-spot' modifications, assumed primary responsibility for the day-to-day educational decisions (p. 320)

Thus, participants in this study made instructional decisions outside of regular collaboration with teachers and special education supervisors. This finding suggests that these paraeducators may view their role as ancillary, rather than collegial and not shared. A feeling of apprehension is also addressed, as paraeducators do not often initiate supportive moments when failing to acquire instructional strategies that could enhance their one-to-one teaching.

Frustrations experienced by paraeducators are often reported as resulting from unclear expectations for their work (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; French 1999b; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999). Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland (1997) observed over 100 paraeducators in sixteen classrooms in an empirical study that documented the effects that paraeducator proximity had on the learning of students with special needs. The researchers were interested in understanding if a paraeducator's proximity to a student accounted for an increase or decrease in the student's involvement in the general education classroom. The primary finding was that when paraeducator proximity to the special needs student was close and sustained this closeness interfered with the general education teacher's responsibility of educating the student with special needs. The researchers found that teachers avoided assuming teaching responsibilities for the student with a disability because of the close proximity of another adult. This avoidance, the researchers observed, created instructional expectations that were 'unrealistic' when it came to the capabilities of the paraeducators. Paraeducators, it was

observed, attempted to perform these teaching tasks defaulted by the teacher even when it became apparent that the venture would not produce the desired instructional results.

Isolation can occur when paraeducators work in close proximity to a single student and assume a wide range of behavioral responsibilities for which they may not be trained. Marks, Schrader, & Levine (1999) studied the perspectives of twenty paraeducators, many of whom also reported taking on the “burden” of inclusion for the students they knew well. The paraeducators reported this “burden” as their sole efforts in trying to reduce the amount of disturbance created by the identified student. And, although participants were generally concerned with disruptions to the other students in the classroom, they were especially attentive in ensuring that the teacher was not bothered by their student. Because both the paraeducators and teachers perceived behavior intervention to be the responsibility of the paraeducator, the participants reported feeling isolated when removing a student from the classroom. Marks, et. al. (1999) document conditions leading to this perception which include having to become the “expert” of their student's needs, wanting to establish an effective partnership with the teachers, and trying to incorporate a multiple of suggestions from professional staff.

When asked directly about their training needs, 200 paraeducators placed at the top of their list wanting to know more about the various disabilities they were working with (Riggs, 2001). Answers to open-ended survey items revealed participants' need to better understand the classification labels of special needs students. The second survey item for which participants expressed agreement was the need for more effective strategies for the behavior management of their students. A desire to be more adept at fostering teamwork and having open communication with teachers was high on the list of perceived training needs, as was a greater understanding of inclusion.

Given my history supervising some twenty paraprofessionals over my eight years as a special education teacher, I was pleasantly surprised to find a large number of literature articles focused on the enhancement of practice for paraeducating in the inclusive classroom. The literature highlighted the growing complexity of the position and recognized the need for a well-defined job description. Researchers also documented that a clear delineation of supervisory tasks for the general and special education staff is lacking. Many paraeducators reported receiving little feedback from their supervisors during the school year. A number of articles acknowledged that the unique training needs of paraeducators continue to go unmet by many school districts. Consequently, paraeducators learn the responsibilities of their position not from the professional staff who are ultimately held responsible for the instruction of all children in their classroom but from other paraprofessionals or on their own.

Methodology

Concluding the literature review, I began to design my study of paraeducator perspectives. As I considered who might comprise my participant sample, I wanted to include those who worked one-to-one with a student in the inclusive setting. Initially, I was unaware that six of the eighteen paraeducators at my school worked exclusively with

a student with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). When I discovered this fact, I reframed my study to focus on this sub-set of potential participants. Five agreed to participate.

Table 1 represents the participant demographics. Of the five who agreed to participate in this study, four are male and one is female. Three held bachelor's degrees, one of which was in education, and one paraeducator was finishing his associate's degree in human services. Each participant had more than two years experience in the field of education, with three years experience being the median. One participant had spent sixteen years in education. Three of the students supported by these paraeducators were seniors, one a junior and the other a freshman.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Age	Pseudonym	Highest level of education	Years of experience	Year of student served	Pseudonym of student
1	F	65	Ms. Bauer	HS	16	First year	Roger
2	M	58	Mr. Klein	MS	5	Third year	Cindy
3	M	43	Mr. Johnston	BS	3	Fourth year	Tom
4	M	42	Mr. Godard	BA	2	Fourth year	Max
5	M	37	Mr. Eberlee	HS	3	Fourth year	Larry

Note. F=Female, M=Male, HS=High School Diploma, MS=Masters of Science Degree, BA=Bachelor of Arts Degree, BS=Bachelor of Science Degree.

For this study I utilized a case study design (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Yin, 1998) that assisted me to analyze the case of paraeducator perspectives. To document this case, I began collecting material artifacts that oriented me to participants' practice in the sight of study. During the initial phase of data collection, I administered a Likert-scale survey (see Appendix). I collected observational fieldnotes over a six week period during instruction in five inclusive classrooms. Courses included calculus, physics, civics, and grades 11 and 12 English. Observations consisted of typical classroom activities such as large and small group instruction, transitions between activities, and assessments. I observed each participant four times, each session lasting twenty minutes.

Collected print data were the basis for generating two structured interview protocols, individual and focus group, that would assist me to understand the perceptions these five paraeducators held about their instruction, experiences with content area teachers, and their instructional opportunities. During a ten week period, I conducted five structured individual interviews, ranging in length from 20 to 63 minutes. The interview focus group was comprised of three participants and lasted 67 minutes. These spoken word data were transcribed, de-identified, and cleansed.

To analyze all data, I used an inductive approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that began with an initial coding run to generate potential master and sub-codes. In a second data

run, to establish internal validity, these master and sub-codes were applied and revised as required. Once a stable set of master and sub-codes were in place, I developed a coding dictionary and coding map to insure reliability across subsequent coding sessions. From the most salient coded material, I identified three key themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that will be reported here.

Discussion

In order for me to better support paraeducators, I realized the need to understand my participants' perspectives. I wanted to consider the beliefs they held about their instruction of special needs adolescents, to document the experiences with content area staff that assisted them to understand the expectations of their instruction, and to acknowledge the instructional opportunities they perceived to be beneficial. In the following discussion, I address three themes that emerged from my investigation of participant's beliefs. These themes including the following: understanding their student, supporting the demands of instruction, and providing behavioral interventions.

Understanding their Student

The following discussion addresses participants' understanding of their practice. Data revealed participants' agreement that understanding their practice involved first understanding their student. To this end, the following were priorities: (a) discerning the unique characteristics of their student's Autism, (b) assessing their student's academic capabilities, and (c) engaging their student in various contexts.

At the core of conceptualizing their practice, all participants in this study discussed the need to understand Autism, and more specifically their student's Autism. As one participant stated, "Qualities for a one-to-one [paraeducator] would be understanding Autism, first of all. And then understanding that not all students with Autism are the same. There's no cookie cutter that makes them anywhere near the same." By better understanding Autism as a condition, and how it affects their student's participation in the inclusive classroom, participants felt they increased their understanding of effective practice.

Four of the five participants described the process they relied on to understand their student's disability. This process consisted first of observation. All participants reported monitoring their students before, during, and after instruction. Participants also reported reflective questioning based on the interactions they had with their student. Examples of questions noted by participants included the following: "What makes him tick?", "Where is his mind right now?", "Where did that unusual comment come from?" For all participants, questioning these interactions was a context for forming hypotheses about the effects Autism had on their student. Ms. Bauer discussed this reflective process when she talked about her work with Roger.

What I try to do is find out about my kid. There are so many different levels of Autism and Asperger's, [so] you have to find out where the kid is at [on the spectrum of Autism]. In Roger's case this is his first year in public school; he's sixteen years-old. So, you have

to find out, what's going to make him comfortable? Is it going to bother him if I get up [during class] and point out, 'Roger, you missed this. Let's get on with it'? I've worked with some [students] that had a very short fuse and didn't want you to bother them. So, learning where your kid is at [on the spectrum of Autism] is pretty much what you do. Ms. Bauer indicates that each student with autism with whom she has worked with varied in their tolerance of her support. By understanding that there are degrees of Autism symptoms, Ms. Bauer initially appears to have approached Roger with caution in order to assess exactly how his disability was going to behaviorally manifest itself when she provided instructional support. By identifying Roger's tolerance for classroom assistance, Ms. Bauer achieved understanding central to Roger's learning.

In addition to identifying their students' degree of disability, participants emphasized that achieving understanding also demanded assessing their student's academic capabilities during instructional activities. Observations revealed that participants assessed their students' abilities across a wide range of activities. Four of the five participants reported that this information allowed them to divert their student from behavioral incidents arising from task demands. Mr. Godard, who supported Max, a senior, elaborated:

You need to learn how tolerant your student is to learning. [You ask] how much they can learn before they pretty much stop learning? [Or], where their working memory hits a point where it collapses and they're pretty much done learning? They're not going to learn anymore ... So, you need to learn about how much your student can take before they reach that point. Then [you] can avoid that [situation] so you can move the student along and not create a breakdown.

Mr. Godard's comment implies that he reflects on Max's efforts during instructional activities to gauge the efficiency of his working memory. He suggests that Max may not be able to fully complete all the instructional activities demanded by the teacher. By understanding at what point Max's working memory becomes inefficient during these activities, however, Mr. Godard is able to support him, thus decreasing the likelihood of inappropriate behavior.

The data identified another strategy participants used to assess their students' learning capacities. My observation of participants' practice showed that three of the five assessed their student's classroom capabilities not only by monitoring the student as they engaged in independent activity, but by working jointly with the student as s/he completed assignments. I observed that these three participants routinely probed their student's knowledge during this joint work by asking clarifying questions that allowed them to gauge their students' understanding of the instructional activity. These participants exhibited a greater level of support when their student appeared to be unable to answer these probes.

Identifying their students' disabilities and assessing their academic capabilities were just two practices considered central to increasing paraeducators' understanding. A third strategy identified by all participants was their engagement with the student across all contexts of activity. Participants reported that their engagement in these various

activities lead to a deeper understanding of the student on a personal level. Mr. Eberlee, a participant who had worked with the same student for two years, reported the importance of engaging with his student in various contexts throughout the school day. He noted, "Like, for instance, the walks we take around the school. It's a relaxed atmosphere to where he opens up a lot better and easier. It's just he and I, and you get to learn more about who he is and about his life and what he wants to do in the future." Mr. Eberlee explained that he goes on these walks after his student Larry has completed homework in study hall. Larry and Mr. Eberlee's walks are still a one-to-one activity, yet Mr. Eberlee asserts that outside the structured classroom environment his student is more relaxed, allowing for open communication, an understanding central to his practice.

Mr. Johnston reported a similar conviction in his individual interview when he discussed his student's mid-year transition to a vocational setting. Mr. Johnston explained, "In my case being off campus in a different environment is actually to the benefit of our relationship." He reported that his student Tom began school overwhelmed by the demands placed on him, which lead to numerous non-compliance behaviors. In this context, Mr. Johnston discussed the difficulty he had in establishing a working relationship with Tom. However, Tom presented a new, more open, personality once relocated to an off campus job sight for part of the week. Mr. Johnston explained, "[He has] kind of an in-school persona verses a public persona." Mr. Johnston's comments suggest that Tom, once transitioned to a vocational setting, took on a persona that was more open to the development of a working relationship.

In asking about the perception that guides their work, I had hoped to understand how paraeducators entered their profession. It is clear that these participants first approached the job by learning about ASD and how the symptoms manifested in their student. I was unable, however, to discover the process by which these paraeducators were instructed about Autism.

Supporting the Demands of Instruction

The following discussion addresses the support participants provided their students in the inclusive classroom. Data revealed that participants employed a wide range of methods to support their students' responses to task demands. The three methods of support participants referenced included the following: (a) encouraging their student to engage in instructional activities, (b) redirecting their student during instructional activities, and (c) performing instructional activities jointly in order to complete the demand of the task.

Encouraging students to engage in instructional activities was frequently reported by participants in their interviews. As Mr. Godard stated, "You want to be direct about things. Also, [you] lead them to believe that they [students] can do something. For instance, if they've already done something, you say, 'Look. You've done this. You can do this now.' So, making them a believer in themselves is always what you do." Mr. Godard indicates that a student with Autism may have difficulty completing a teacher's task demand even if the student has already performed the demand in the past. It also

appears that Mr. Godard links task completion with a student's self-esteem by suggesting that students need first to believe in themselves to complete a task that they have refused.

Mr. Klein reported a different understanding as to the reason why encouragement is necessary. He was a father of a grown son with Autism. He also supported Cindy, a third-year student who's one-to-one support service would soon end due to her improvements academically and socially. Mr. Klien discussed having to continually transition a student toward independence by encouraging them to recognize their strengths:

What we need to do with a student with Autism is we need to push them past their levels of comfort. As a one-to-one, that is what we got to do. I think it is part of what we need to do as part of the educational environment, too. We need to understand where those comfort zone are for them. And [these comfort zones] are part of the disability and they are part of the normal every day, everybody—we all have them. But, we got to push them [the students with Autism] through their levels of comfort. And, what you have to do is build confidence in your student. You have to build their confidence in their ability to push past their comfort zone. And sometimes you really have to push them hard to do that. You know, this isn't something they're going to jump out and say, 'Yeah, I'm ready to do that!' They won't do that. You got to push them into that environment. It is not an environment that is easy for them to do.

In his statement, Mr. Klein recognizes that a student with Autism may feel a level of comfort from the support they receive by a one-to-one paraeducator. It may be this comfort, however, that holds a student back from taking on the challenges of instruction, thus instilling complacency. In fact, Mr. Klein's comment suggests that a student who finds comfort in support will not willingly put themselves in a difficult situation. There appears to be a certain level of complacency established on the part of a school culture, as well. This systemic comfort needs self-monitoring from the one-to-one in order to maximize the benefit provided to the student. For Mr. Klein, constantly encouraging Cindy to challenge her own comfort while at school may allow her to gain independence in a classroom.

In addition to providing encouragement, participants were routinely observed redirecting their students back to the academic activity in which they were engaged. During one observation of Ms. Bauer's one-to-one instruction with Roger, I observed sixteen distinct attempts to redirect his behavior. The most frequent redirection technique she used was to point to a section on his quiz and say, 'right here, Roger.' Roger would then look to where her finger pointed. On three occasions, however, Ms. Bauer was observed pointing to fill-in-the-blank questions on the quiz with her thumb and reading them aloud. Roger would answer her softly before writing in the response. During another incident she observed Roger flipping his quiz to the back page. "Wrong page," Ms. Bauer responded. She turned the quiz back over. When Roger initially skipped a question early in the quiz because he was unsure of the plural form of the answer, Ms. Bauer pointed to the blank line and said, "Use the 's'".

When it appeared that encouragement and redirection were not sufficient in supporting their students, participants were observed jointly participating in the instructional activity. A majority of the participants were observed jointly performing note taking activities demanded by the teacher. The most occurring demand participants jointly participated in with their student was note taking during lectures. In all twenty observations, teachers required students to take some form of lecture based notes. Only one participant did not jointly perform this activity and instead monitored his student. Another reported that his student applied heavy pressure on the pencil when writing. Aware that his student's hand would begin hurting after a few minutes of note taking, Mr. Johnston was observed as the only one of the pair taking notes. He elaborated:

I was a little skeptical with Tom in that I should necessarily be a scribe for him in all circumstances. But, I think I've seen some effectiveness in him being able to take notes in class and [I] urge him to do the best he can with notes ... If he sees that I'm consistent with my carrying through and offering assistance it builds that trusting relationship, which is essential and core to being an effective one-on-one.

Mr. Johnston's implies that Tom may not be able to keep up with the demand of note taking in this particular class. Therefore, he takes notes without requiring Tom to as well. Still, Mr. Johnston's initial appraisal of Tom's lack of participation appears to suggest that Tom might have been using his disability to escape the task of note taking. By continually offering support, however, Mr. Johnston reports that he has moved Tom into taking on some independence in his note taking. These opportunities appear to be at Tom's discretion.

What has become clear in this data is that paraeducators often take on an academic role during classroom instruction. Though not trained in every subject taken by their student, paraeducators offer joint support to aide them in meeting the demands of the classroom.

Providing Behavioral Interventions

The following discussion addresses the behavioral intervention strategies in which participants engaged. The data revealed that participants utilized only a few intervention strategies in promoting positive behavioral outcomes when their students engaged in classroom activities. The following three strategies were noted: (a) modeling desirable behavior, (b) removing the student from the environment, and (c) deescalating behavior and following-up.

All participants discussed the importance of modeling desirable classroom attributes as a means to decrease difficulties for their student. And, while participants described modeling different behaviors, four independently discussed modeling self-restrained behavior as the most desirable. For these participants, self-restrained behavior was often described paradoxically as not overreacting to unmet classroom expectations, but taking seriously the demands of instructional activities. Participants also indicated that modeling desirable behavior required taking a firm, yet encouraging, position when completing classroom tasks jointly with their student. Ms. Bauer explained, "In Roger's

case it's a matter of keeping him comfortable, settled. But not, I would use the word, 'molly-coddle' him. In other words, it's not a big deal to me [if I make a mistake] so it should not be to him ... You keep him comfortable and don't blow things out of proportion. Because with, Roger, especially, if he thinks that something is wrong, or that he's done something that is not right, he gets very upset.” Ms. Bauer concludes that Roger may require a certain level of comfort during instruction in order to not become upset. Her explanation appears to imply that Roger becomes mad when he does commit an error in class. Therefore, Ms. Bauer models a steady demeanor when completing classroom activities even if Roger makes a mistake. Her comment also seems to suggest that she trivializes Roger's errors in an effort to have him continue his work.

Three of the five participants referenced removing a student from the classroom if he or she presented behavioral challenges. Participants frequently referenced students' inattention to classroom instruction as the behavior that warranted removal. During observations, however, the removal of a student from the classroom never occurred. Two years prior to working with Larry, Mr. Eberlee reported working with a student who presented a host of behavioral challenges. Central to the difficulty, Mr. Eberlee discussed, was the student's perseverance:

He [the student] would always have his favorite bands, his favorite movies, on his mind. So, I don't know how much he really got out of class, only because he was always focused on what's in his head, which was his favorite music groups. And it was extremely hard to get him focused. And, if he didn't want to learn something or if he didn't want to pay attention, then he wasn't going to do it. There was no way really [to get him focused]. You would have to ask him to step out of the classroom and go for a walk. But, that didn't get him refocused, either.

Mr. Eberlee speculates that his student exhibited difficulty learning in the classroom because he was distracted by his own interests. In an effort to provide behavioral support, Mr. Eberlee took this student out of the environment to engage him in a physical activity. In this case, while Mr. Eberlee notes the use of behavioral intervention, he is also upfront that his strategies do not necessarily work. This finding is consistent with current research addressing the need for paraeducators' access to training in effective behavioral interventions.

Modeling desirable classroom attributes and removing a student from the environment were just two techniques participants utilized when supporting their students behaviorally. Another technique participants referenced during the focus group interview was using the information gleaned from their relationship with the student as a tool to deescalate a tense situation. Participants reported that during these tense situations they redirected their students' focus away from the difficulty they were experiencing and on to a thought more personal in nature. Once the student became less agitated, the participants were able to follow-up with them and provide positive alternatives to use in the future. Mr. Godard noted and recalled student who had physically assaulted his prior one-to-one instructor. With this student, Mr. Godard respected the need for mutual dependence.

This student had a way to make people very angry with him and practically dislike him ... And, he was a big kid, but everything [he did] wrong would be 'we'. You know, he would say, 'we did this', or 'we did that'. He was not going to let you separate yourself from him. And, I never got smacked in the face. I think it's because I was always like, 'us'. I'd refer to 'us' all the time, too. 'You and I, right?' Not just you [the student] ... And I would try my best not to get angry because that would do no good. That would just get him going. And, like I said, I referred to 'us', 'you and I'. However, I was assertive enough to say, 'Okay. Now, I need to bring this up with you. Now, it is time to say something.' And he got pretty good with that technique.

Mr. Godard's comment implies that his past student may have been unable to separate himself from his one-on-one paraeducator during a difficult situation. Mr. Godard intimates that through his continued demonstration of a relationship to this student he was able to deescalate these tense moments. Conversely, this student would be less able to deescalate if Mr. Godard became upset at him. In fact, becoming upset with this student appears to increase the likelihood of aggression. Mr. Godard's statement also indicates that he would follow-up the behavioral incident once calm was restored. He reported that this student became better able to use this technique.

I had expected to find that paraeducators, more often than not, reported pulling their students out of the classroom when challenging behaviors arose than remain in the classroom to intervene. The participants in this study appear to use removal from the classroom as a last resort. Also, rather than a punishment, paraeducators encouraged positive intervention to help the student transition back into the classroom.

Conclusion

I entered into this study as a way to understand the perspectives of paraeducators supporting a student with Autism in the general education setting. As a supervisor of paraeducators I have been available to discuss with them their concerns about job performance. Yet privately, I have acknowledged that conversation alone has not been effective in fully supporting their growth. In concluding this study, however, I am struck by how thoughtful my participants were about their students. They were open and honest about the challenges they faced on the job and were as equally frank when discussing the time they spent with the students. In fact, I am surprised by just how much they knew about their students and the condition which affects them.

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The Role of Self-Efficacy on Job Readiness s and Career Choice among People with Intellectual Disability in Singapore

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Abstract

The study examined the role of general and social self-efficacy on job readiness and career choices among youths with intellectual disabilities (ID) in Singapore. Forty-seven students were recruited, with an IQ ranging from 50 to 70. Results showed that general self-efficacy was moderately related to social self-efficacy, but highly related to job readiness. Three self-report instruments were administered, including: the General Self-Efficacy Scale - ID version, the Glasgow Social Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Job Readiness Scale – ID version. Students were also asked to indicate their career choices and provided their demographic characteristics through a semi-structured questionnaire. Research findings provided both special educators and vocational rehabilitation professional with information on the importance of self-efficacy and suggested for interventions aimed at developing students' self-efficacy to improve their job readiness.

The Role of Self-Efficacy on Job Readiness s and Career Choice among People with Intellectual Disability in Singapore

The issues of finding and sustaining employment among individuals with intellectual disability (ID) have been raised among researchers (Goldstein & Morgan, 2002; Moran, McDermott, and Butkus, 2001; Wehman, 1992; Wolfe, Boone, & Blanchett, 1988). Unemployment rates were found to be relatively higher than general population. Hirst's (1987) study on careers on young people with disabilities revealed that the population with ID has a more limited range of career options compared to the population with physical disabilities.

Cinamon and Gifsh (2004) examined the perceptions of the world of work among individuals with mild ID and found that they showed strong willingness to work, but had little information regarding work, such as familiarity with the range of occupations and awareness of the various benefits of employment. Research has supported the need for individuals with ID to receive supported employment (Stevens & Martin, 1999) and specific instruction on how to behave at different work situations, such as handling conflicts, relating to colleagues, responding to supervision (Black & Langone, 1997; Cinamon & Gifsh, 2004).

The nature of work of modern times has evolved from production to knowledge and service base, requiring adaptability, effective cognitive and interpersonal skills across jobs. It was found that people persistently unemployed lack necessary social skills required in the work environment (Strauser, Waldrop, & Ketz, 1999). A Canadian study revealed that most employers desired employees who exhibit the ability to communicate, think, work with others, as well as demonstrate responsibility, a positive attitude and behaviour (McLaughlin, 1995). Other researchers have suggested that in order to sustain employment, individuals need to show interpersonal skills, conflict management ability, teamwork, emotional stability, follow supervision and instructions, be accountable, follow time schedule for work, and display motivation (Keim & Strauser, 2000; Lingg, 1996; Molseed, Alsup, & Voyles, 2003; Strauser, et. al, 1999). Further, researchers suggested that confidence in an individual's ability to execute work skills is essential for his or her employability (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990).

A study by Och and Roessler (2001) revealed that students with disabilities showed a significant lag in career maturity. They found that special education students had significantly lower scores than their general-education peers on career decision-making self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, career exploration intentions, and vocational identity. Other research has shown that individuals with ID failed to maintain employment due to poor social skills or inappropriate interpersonal skills on the job (Greenspan & Shoultz, 1981; Hanley-Maxwell, Bordieri, & Merz, 1996).

These studies pointed to the importance of implementing a variety of vocational programs for students with ID to help them develop the knowledge, skills and self-confidence required in entering the workforce. Furthermore, given the fast paced and changing industry in Singapore where many jobs are becoming service-oriented jobs and short term contract positions, it is essential that people with ID are able to perform service-related jobs and are equipped with varied skills to perform multi-tasks.

Vocational rehabilitation is a vital component in the education and training of people with ID. In Singapore, several special schools have aimed towards improving vocational skills of students with ID to help them better transit from school setting to work environment. Various vocational training programs have been implemented over years. These programs primarily focus on enhancing their life skills, social skills, as well as cultivating the work habits and skills of identified jobs they can possibly perform. Jobs available for people with ID in Singapore are often manual jobs like factory operators, cleaners, dishwashers, housekeeping staff, store helpers, and repair/maintenance workers; or service related jobs such as retail assistants, food and beverage service crews, waiters/waitresses, baking assistants, assistant hairdressers, and office assistants. Job opportunities in the office settings are relatively fewer for people with ID now as the job nature requires more multi-tasking and varied office skills, which are difficult for people with ID to cope with.

The Singapore Government has also highlighted the need to be an inclusive society where persons with disabilities are supported to reach their full potential and be

contributing members of the society. In the efforts to fully integrate people with disabilities into the community, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) appointed the Steering Committee for the Enabling Masterplan in September 2006 to address various vital issues concerning people with disabilities such as physical environment, early intervention, education, and employment. One of the recommendations made by the Committee was the extension of special education schooling up to the age of 21 for students who can benefit from additional pre-vocational and vocational skills training. It is aimed that the students with special needs will be trained with relevant skills and be more adequately prepared before their transition into employment (Enabling Masterplan Steering Committee, 2007).

Various studies have shown that factors such as age, gender, work experience, and IQ affect an individual's career development (Och & Roessler, 2001; Ohler, Levinson, & Barker, 1993). The current research framework suggests that apart from these characteristics (Lingg, 1996; Och & Roessler, 2001), self-efficacy can play a role in the development of job readiness and type of career choice among individuals with ID. As postulated by Bandura (1994), self-efficacy can affect our cognitions, motivation, affect, and choices. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy for a specific task are more likely to engage in the task, put in more effort, produce quality performance, and persist in the face of obstacles. Conversely, individuals with low self-efficacy are more likely to avoid situations that exceed their perceptions of their ability to cope, produce poorer performance, and give up more easily in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 1977, Bandura & Adams, 1977). This current study is based on a social cognitive perspective using Bandura's self-efficacy theory as its theoretical framework.

Many researchers have extended and applied self-efficacy theory to vocational behaviour. Studies on people with and without disabilities have shown that self-efficacy expectations significantly influence career choices, performance, persistence, and employment outcome (Ásmundsdóttir, 2004; Betz & Hackett, 1981; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1986; Panagos & Dubois, 1999). The current research extends existing literature on the relation between self-efficacy theory and vocational behaviour to people with ID specifically. It is posited that individuals with higher general self-efficacy are more likely to approach work-related tasks, produce quality work, persist during difficulties, and thus, demonstrate higher job readiness levels. In this study, job readiness is defined as a state of being prepared for employment by acquiring the skills and behaviour required to transit from school to work. Job readiness is measured by four main areas: life skills, affective skills, employability skills, and job seeking skills (Chan, Rubin, Lee, & Pruett, 2003; Goodship, 1990; Hegner, 1991; Kallio, 1993; Knight and Aucoin, 1999). Life skills include independent daily living skills such as grooming and maintaining personal hygiene, use of public transportation, appropriate behaviour, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and vocational aspirations. Affective skills are related to self-confidence, awareness of own interests and abilities, recognition of authority, ability to work as a team, and conflict resolution. Employability skills encompass work attitude, work habits such as good attendance, job knowledge and skills, quality work production, ability to give and request assistance, and knowledge of employee versus employer

relations. Lastly, job seeking skills include ability to gain employment such as knowledge of job search process and interview skills.

In addition, the research provided evidence to support the influence of social efficacy on the efficacy for occupational pursuits through aspirations and academic achievement (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). Although the general self-efficacy and social self-efficacy overlap on some concepts, they are also dissimilar in their specific focus. General self-efficacy is a judgment of perceived capability for performing a specific task in general. It has a broader framework in comparison to social self-efficacy, which focuses on one's perceived ability in forming interpersonal relationships with others such as colleagues, friends, or family members, and performing social roles (Bandura, et. al, 2001). Bandura posited that social self-efficacy has a direct effect on one's efficacy for jobs requiring social skills.

Researchers have found that many students with disabilities are not successful in finding appropriate jobs or sustaining employment due to a lack of social interpersonal skills (Goldstein & Morgan, 2002; Wehman, 1992; Wolfe, Boone, & Blanchett, 1988). Another study on people with ID showed that poor social competence posed as a major obstacle to successful employment and independent living (Greenspan & Shoultz, 1981). These findings suggest the vital role of social skills play in influencing career or job readiness.

Given the pivotal weight of social skills in employment success, the current research aims to find out the independent influence of social self-efficacy along with general self-efficacy on job readiness. Further, as one's perceived efficacy for different types of career pursuits play a determinative role in the career he or she chooses or actively avoids (Bandura, et. al, 2001), it is of specific interest whether social self-efficacy affects the type of career choice, that is, service related or manual jobs.

The major challenges facing the field of vocational rehabilitation regarding people with ID are the preparation for career and the expansion of employment opportunities (Walls & Fullmer, as cited in Cinamon & Gifsh, 2004). Little research was found in further exploring the relation between career development and people with specific disability, particular ID (Conyers, Koch, & Szymanski, 1998), which would have been helpful in the development and evaluation of vocational training programs for people with ID. This research aims to find out how perceived self-efficacy can play a role in the development of job readiness and type of career choice among individuals with mild ID.

The purpose of this study is to: (1) examine the relationship of general and social self-efficacy on the job readiness levels among people with ID; and, (2) find out the effects of social self-efficacy on their type of career choice. The study posits the following research hypotheses:

1. General self-efficacy is a predictor of job readiness level among individuals with ID.
2. Social self-efficacy is a predictor of job readiness level among individuals with ID.

3. Social self-efficacy is a predictor of the type of career choice. Individuals with higher social self-efficacy are more likely to choose service-related careers requiring social and communication skills, while individuals with lower social self-efficacy are less likely to do so.

The results of this study provide information regarding the job readiness levels and choice of career among students with ID in Singapore. Research findings also shed light on the role of general and social self-efficacy on the job readiness levels among people with ID. Further, it studies the relationship of social self-efficacy on the type of career chosen (service-related or manual jobs), which provides vocational rehabilitation counselors and school professionals with information on the importance of self-efficacy and advocate for developing self-efficacy enrichment programs apart from life skills and job skills training. Efforts in raising the students' general and social self-efficacy can be increased, such as implementing vocational exploration and training programs, to improve their confidence in performing tasks, handling various social situations, and thus widen their career options and improve their job readiness levels.

Method

Participants

Participants comprised of 47 students from a special school catered to people with ID in Singapore. Students in the vocational classes of the special school who meet the criteria: aged from 16 to 21, IQ ranging from 50 to 70, and able to understand and provide information, were included in the study. Participants who gave consent were interviewed to obtain their basic demographic characteristics. This was also part of the selection process where participants who exhibited poor ability to understand or unable to provide information were excluded from the study.

Instruments

The survey consisted of four sections: (i) Questionnaire Part I: Demographic Characteristics, (ii) Questionnaire Part II: Career Choice Inventory (CCI), (iii) The Job Readiness Scale – ID version (JRS-ID), (iv) The General Self-Efficacy Scale – ID version (GSES-ID), and (v) The Glasgow Social Self-Efficacy Scale (GSSES).

Demographic characteristics. Demographic characteristics included name (optional), gender, date of birth, age, school, race, religion, IQ level, presence of other disability or medical condition, length of vocational training received, working experience, and the trainer's feedback on the students' behavioural or family issues. The date of birth, length of vocational training received, and working experience were obtained from the participants, while the other information was gathered from the school records, teachers, or job placement officers.

Career Choice Inventory (CCI). The CCI was modified from a self-directed career preference selection inventory for individuals with ID developed by Stock, Davies, Secor, and Wehmeyer (2003). Due to cross cultural differences, a similar but different set of job

categories were used in this study for the participants to rate their job preferences. The career choices consisted of two main categories, (i) service related jobs which includes retail assistants, food and beverage service crews, waiters/waitresses, baking assistants, assistant hairdressers, and office assistants; (ii) manual jobs like factory operators, cleaners, dishwashers, housekeeping staff, store helpers, and repair/maintenance workers. The 12 occupations commonly available for people with ID in Singapore were identified with the input of job placement officers in the special schools. Each of 12 career options was presented with the description of basic job function and a corresponding picture of man and woman performing the same work. This is to clarify their understanding of the job options and to minimize any possibility of gender stereotypes. The participants were then asked to indicate their choice of career. The choices were keyed in as '0' for manual jobs, and '1' for service related jobs.

The Job Readiness Scale – ID version (JRS-ID). Job readiness was assessed with a 32-item instrument, which was developed after a review of literature (Chan, Rubin, Lee, & Pruett, 2003; Goodship, 1990; Hegner, 1991; Kallio, 1993; Knight & Aucoin, 1999) and feedback from experts in the field, namely, a job placement officer, a psychologist, and a special education professor. The JRS-ID measures various skills required for transition from school to work as suggested in researches: an individual's life skills, interpersonal skills, employability skills, and job seeking skills. A 5-point Likert-type response scale, ranging from 1 (will not do this at all) to 5 (will always do this), was used for each item. Psychometric properties are not available for this instrument.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale – ID version (GSES-ID). The GSES-ID version consisted of 12 items, which was adapted from Bosscher and Smit (1998). A 5-point Likert-type response scale, ranging from 1 (will not do this at all) to 5 (will always do this), was used for each item. The items measured an individual's perceived initiative, effort, and persistence. Bosscher and Smit (1998) reported a coefficient alpha of .69 for the total scale, with the three subscale internal consistency coefficients equivalent to .64, .63, and .64, respectively. They conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of the factor structure and results supported the three-factor model.

The Glasgow Social Self-Efficacy Scale (GSSES). The GSSES, developed by Payne and Jahoda (2004) to measure social self-efficacy in people with intellectual disabilities, consisted of 17 items. The items examined one's belief in his or her ability to perform a number of communication acts, which included telling someone you are happy, telling someone you are sad, telling someone you think they are wrong, and talking to someone when they are busy. These acts were considered in relation to several communication partners like a co-worker, family member, best friend, and new people. A three-point response format was used to answer each question: not at all (0), a little bit (1), or a lot (2), giving a range of possible scores from 0 to 34. Payne and Jahoda (2004) reported a test-retest reliability correlation coefficient of .90 for a sample of people with intellectual disability. Cronbach's alpha for internal reliability of the scale was .78.

Design

This research adopted a correlational survey design. This study involved a face to face survey on sample participants from a special school for people with ID. The survey questionnaires comprising of 4 parts, including the demographic characteristics and the measures of the four study variables, career choice, job readiness, general self-efficacy, and social self-efficacy.

Procedure

Consent for conducting the research study in the special schools was sought by contacting the principals via emails and phone calls. The survey instruments were revised and developed based on literature review as well as consultation from three experts, that is, a job placement officer, a psychologist, and a professor of special education. A standardized administration manual was also developed. Subsequently, the survey was pilot tested on three participants, and the content, structure, and wording of the survey were further revised.

Data Collection

All participants were briefed about the study and consent from the individual was obtained before the data collection. It was explained to the participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

There were three interviewers in the current study. They all had knowledge about people with special needs, and were experienced in working with individuals with ID. One of the interviewers is the first author who was a psychologist, and has conducted psychological assessments and group trainings for people with various disabilities or developmental issues. The other two interviewers were trained in occupational therapy and have encountered people with disabilities during their internship or volunteer work in various voluntary welfare organizations. Further, they are comfortable conversing with individuals with ID. Prior to the actual interview, the researcher conducted a training session for the other two interviewers. They were briefed about the survey instruments and possible response biases from the participants. Thereafter, they were shown an actual administration and taught to probe the participants for clearer responses as instructed in the standardized administration manual. Subsequently, the researcher sat in each of the interviewers' first interview session to ensure that the survey instruments were administered properly.

The interviewers in the current study followed the standardized administration manual closely. Participants were interviewed on a one-to-one basis to obtain their demographic characteristics. Further, instructions for completing the survey were explained to all the participants. It was emphasized that there is no right or wrong answer to the survey items. Participants were then shown the Career Choice Inventory (CCI) and asked to indicate their choice of job. Subsequently, the participants were interviewed using the Job

Readiness Scale – ID version (JRS-ID), the General Self-Efficacy Scale – ID version (GSES-ID), and the Glasgow Social Self-Efficacy Scale (GSSES). In the event that participants did not appear to understand the survey content, questions in the survey were explained in accordance to the standardized administration manual. Upon completion of the survey, participants were debriefed. For participants who could not answer the survey items despite explanation and clarification, the survey process was discontinued; participants debriefed and excluded from the study.

Following the survey, other demographics such as their race, religion, IQ level and medical condition were gathered from their school records. In addition, the trainer's feedback on the student regarding any behavioural, family, or other issues that may hinder the student's self-efficacy, career options, or job readiness were obtained for further analysis and discussion.

Data Analyses

Data from the survey were entered into a computer and analyzed with the SPSS 14.0 version for Windows. The following statistical methods were used in the study:

Descriptive Statistics. The frequency of data was assessed. The means and standard deviations of the variables general self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, and job readiness were computed.

Reliability Analysis. The internal consistency reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, were computed for the three scales used in the study: the JRS-ID, the GSES-ID, and the GSSES.

Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient and Point-Biserial Correlation. A series of correlation tests were used to test for the direction and strength of relationship of the variables: general self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, career option, and job readiness. Further, coefficients were computed to determine if any correlation exists between job readiness and the five demographic variables: age, IQ, gender, length of vocational training, and work experience.

Hierarchical Regression Analyses. To validate Hypothesis 1, hierarchical regression analysis was employed to examine if general self-efficacy can predict job readiness, controlling for demographic characteristics and social self-efficacy.

For Hypothesis 2, hierarchical regression analysis was also used to find out whether social self-efficacy can predict job readiness, controlling for demographic characteristics and general self-efficacy.

Further, a series of regression analyses was conducted to examine whether the effects of social self-efficacy on job readiness were mediated by the effects of general self-efficacy.

Logistic Regression Analysis. To validate Hypothesis 3, logistic regression analysis was conducted to determine whether social self-efficacy can predict the type of career choice, i.e. service related careers or manual jobs. The demographic characteristics and general self-efficacy were controlled for to isolate the effects.

Results

There were 29 males and 18 females, ages from 15 to 19 years old ($M = 16.97$) among participants. Their IQ ranges from 50 to 70 ($M = 59.55$) and 25.5% of them had other comorbid disability or medical conditions, such as William's Syndrome, Russell Silver Syndrome, autism, and epilepsy. Thirty participants had some working experience, while 17 of them had none.

Descriptive information was shown in Table 1 for the five demographic characteristics and four variables: general self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, career choice, and job readiness. Bivariate correlations for the main study variables were given in Table 2. General self-efficacy was moderately and positively related to social self-efficacy, but highly and positively related to job readiness. Social self-efficacy was also positively correlated to job readiness. Career choice did not relate to either of the variables. The internal consistency reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, were computed for the three scales. The internal consistency of the JRS-ID scale is 0.80, suggesting high reliability. Cronbach's alpha for the GSES-ID scale is .75 and for the GSES is .64.

To validate Hypothesis 1, hierarchical regression was performed so that the demographic characteristics and social self-efficacy can be controlled for in examining the contribution of general self-efficacy to the prediction of job readiness. Table 3 shows the results of hierarchical regression analysis. The results of the analysis indicated that the demographic characteristics and social self-efficacy accounted for a significant amount of job readiness variability, $R^2 = .28$, $F(6, 40) = 2.68$, $p < .05$. General self-efficacy accounted for a significant proportion of the job readiness variance, R^2 change = .32, $F(1, 39) = 32.45$, $p < .05$. The unique contribution of general self-efficacy was found to be significant ($\beta = .74$, $p < .05$). Of the control variables, none of the individual variables contributed significantly once all the variables were entered, whereas general self-efficacy retained its significant contribution to job readiness once all the variables were entered in the equation. Hence, general self-efficacy is a significant predictor of job readiness, supporting Hypothesis 1. This indicates that individuals with ID who have higher general self-efficacy tended to have higher levels of job readiness.

Another hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to find out whether social self-efficacy can predict job readiness, controlling for demographic characteristics and general self-efficacy. Two sets of variables were used. In the first step, the demographic characteristics (age, gender, work experience, IQ, length of training) and general self-efficacy were entered. Results indicated that the demographic characteristics and general self-efficacy accounted for a significant amount of job readiness variability, $R^2 = .61$, $F(6, 40) = 10.45$, $p < .05$ (Table 4). Social self-efficacy was entered in the second step of

this analysis, but did not account for a significant proportion of the job readiness variance ($\beta = -.02, p > .05$). Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

As literature suggest an overlapping relationship between general self-efficacy and social self-efficacy, a series of regression analyses was conducted to examine whether the effects of social self-efficacy on job readiness were mediated by the effects of general self-efficacy. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 5. Results showed that social self-efficacy is a significant predictor of job readiness ($\beta = .31, p < .05$). Social self-efficacy also accounted for a significant amount of general self-efficacy variability ($\beta = .43, p < .05$). General self-efficacy is a significant predictor of job readiness ($\beta = .75, p < .05$). The joint contribution of social self-efficacy and general self-efficacy predicting job readiness showed a significant mediation effect. When social self-efficacy was entered simultaneously with general self-efficacy, the beta coefficient for social self-efficacy dropped to $-.02$ (*ns*), whereas the beta coefficient for general self-efficacy was $.76$ ($p < .05$). The drop-off in the contribution of social self-efficacy from Model 1 to Model 2 (i.e., from significant to nonsignificant) revealed a potent mediation effect. Hence, general self-efficacy overshadows the relationship between social self-efficacy and job readiness. This finding explains the lack of support for Hypothesis 2.

To validate Hypothesis 3, logistic regression analysis was conducted to determine whether social self-efficacy can predict the type of career choice, i.e. service related careers or manual jobs. The demographic characteristics and general self-efficacy were statistically controlled for to isolate the effects. Results indicate that social self-efficacy is not a predictor of the type of career choice ($OR = .56, p > .05$). Thus, there is no support for Hypothesis 3.

Discussion and Limitations

The results of this study provided support for the hypothesis that general self-efficacy is a predictor of job readiness. Participants with a greater degree of general self-efficacy were more likely to have higher levels of job readiness than were participants with a lower degree of general self-efficacy. The present results are consistent with previous findings reported in preceding studies that self-efficacy is associated with vocational behaviour such as employment outcome (Ásmundsdóttir, 2004; Michon, Weeghel, Kroon, & Schene, 2005; Regenold, Sherman, & Fenzel, 1999). These findings lend support to the application of Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory to vocational rehabilitation.

Results also showed that social self-efficacy predicts job readiness, but the association drops to insignificance when general self-efficacy is considered concurrently. Thus, mediation effects were tested and shown to be significant. This indicated that general self-efficacy mediates the relationship between social self-efficacy and job readiness. The current findings are in line with the influence of social competence on job readiness as well as the overlapping relationship between general and social self-efficacy as suggested in literature (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Greenspan & Shoultz, 1981; Goldstein & Morgan, 2002; Wehman, 1992).

In addition, the present study provided information regarding the career choices of students with ID in Singapore. Out of 47 participants, 36 chose service related jobs, while only 11 chose manual jobs. One reason to explain for the lack of support that social self-efficacy predicts the type of career choice, i.e. service-related or manual jobs, could be that students have been primed to aim for service related jobs as such jobs are being viewed as higher ranking in comparison to manual jobs. There is a strong stigma for manual jobs such as cleaning and dishwashing, which are often less preferred in Singapore. Parents from higher socio-economic class might be concerned about issues like family status or 'losing face', and thus refrain their children from undertaking low status jobs such as cleaning.

Vocational training programs implemented in the special schools in Singapore has focused largely on developing life skills and job skills thus far. The current research findings suggest that self-efficacy beliefs are influential in shaping the career development of the students with ID. Therefore, apart from the current vocational training program implemented, interventions directed at strengthening the students' self-efficacy are important in their development of job readiness. Vocational rehabilitation programs should integrate job skills training, cultivating work habits, and enhancing self-efficacy components. Rehabilitation counselors can conceptualize and identify areas of low self-efficacy which impedes their job readiness. They can then use the four main sources of efficacy information, i.e. (i) performance accomplishments, (ii) vicarious experiences, (iii) verbal persuasion, and (iv) physiological states, to provide a framework for the implementation of intervention programs (Conyers, Enright, & Strauser, 1998; Regenold, et. al, 1999).

For example, ways of developing general and social self-efficacy by performance accomplishments and vicarious experiences may include involving students with ID in a variety of vocational programs where they constantly receive modeling from experts and opportunities to perform various tasks or behaviours until they reach mastery. In addition, they can be taught social skills such as communicating with others effectively and conflict resolution through a variety of methods such as story-telling, videos, and role-plays. It will be beneficial for the students if their parents and vocational rehabilitation trainers enhance their self-efficacy by verbal persuasion methods, such as, constantly encouraging and praising the students for the progress they attain. Techniques such as relaxation, biofeedback, systematic desensitization, and stress inoculation training can be used to help individuals in decreasing emotional arousal like fear and anxiety in new, threatening situations, such as starting their first job or handling social conflicts at work, and increase their efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1977; Conyers, et al., 1998). Research has also shown that supportive relationships allow individuals to have a model on managing difficult situations and cushion the negative effects of stressors (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996).

The responses participants provided on the job readiness and efficacy scales revealed the students' perceived common strengths and weaknesses, bringing to light some areas where the students will benefit from further training. In general, the participants exhibited

efficacy in following instructions, completing tasks, commuting to work independently, reporting to work on time and regularly, etc. This can be explained by the job training and exposure they have received in school and attachments at various work sites. However, it was evident that participants generally sense an inadequacy in their job seeking and interview skills. Many of them also related that they were unsure of their ability to handle unexpected problems. Upon identifying the students' self-perceived inadequacies which are limiting their job readiness, job trainers and counselors can adopt efficacy-based interventions to increase their self-efficacy. In this case, the vocational rehabilitation professionals can teach and model the job search process and job interview skills, such as writing a resume, or communicating effectively with employers. Subsequently, students can be taught techniques to reduce their anxiety when attending job interviews. They can then be provided with job interview opportunities for achieving performance accomplishments and be affirmed for effort and mastery. Future research can include the development and evaluation of training programs aimed at increasing the self-efficacy and job readiness of students with ID.

Due to their cognitive limitations, people with ID enter the workforce with a narrower range of job options compared to people without any disabilities. Having fewer options to exercise control over their lives negatively affects self-efficacy beliefs (Abery, 1994). It will be beneficial if school counselors or professionals work with parents to guide and facilitate their children in their vocational exploration, training, and job search process (Hall, 2003). Involving the students in the transition planning and career-decision making can enhance their self-efficacy (Blalock, 1996). The students with ID can be exposed to the various careers through career talks, job site visits, or work attachments, to increase their awareness about the roles and requirements of the different occupations. Further, they would benefit from assessment of their abilities and interests, as well as career counseling by trained vocational professionals to arrive at a career decision and job fit. It would allow individuals with ID to have a sense of control if they are given the information that is necessary and freedom to choose the type of job they would eventually undertake.

Parents and adults working with students with ID should believe that these students can succeed in various jobs. They should not overly lower their expectations, but encourage students to be actively involved in a wide range of vocational training and behaviours (Ryan, 1995). While pursuing to reach the children's fullest potential, parents should not be overly protective or unrealistic. Feedback from trainers and placement officers revealed that several parents insist on placing their children on jobs requiring high level of abilities which these children do not possess despite training. Adversely, parents refrained their children with very limited skills from choosing manual jobs can hinder their children from gaining any fruitful employment at all. It is important for them to realize that these are respectable jobs and their children can derive meaning and gain independence by participating in the labor force. Hence, parents can play a vital role in influencing the career development of children.

Some limitations of the current study include having a small sample size. The researchers had difficulty obtaining the support of other special schools to collaborate on this

research. Duplication of this study using a greater sample will increase the generalizability of the study. Research can also measure the effects of parental efficacy and guidance on the children's efficacy levels, career choices, and job readiness. The general self-efficacy scale can be refined to include the various dimensions, such as social self-efficacy, work-related self-efficacy, career search self-efficacy, etc. Further, due to reserved rights of parties involved and confidentiality issues, pictures of local people performing the various jobs could not be used in the Career Choice Inventory (CCI). Hence, it may be culturally biased to some extent. Future research may consider such factors and increase the time and budget allocated to make further revisions.

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Table 1

Means and standard deviations for demographic characteristics and variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Demographic characteristics:		
Gender	0.38	0.49
Age	16.97	0.83
IQ	59.55	7.57
Length of training	0.43	0.58
Work experience	0.64	0.49
Variables:		
General self-efficacy	39.96	7.65
Social self-efficacy	17.26	4.58
Career choice	0.77	0.43
Job readiness	115.81	15.79

Note: Measures were based on *N* = 47.

Table 2

Correlation table for general self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, career choice, and job readiness

	General Self-Efficacy	Social Self Efficacy	Career Choice
General Self-Efficacy			
Social Self-Efficacy	.43**		
Career Choice	.21	.09	
Job Readiness	.75**	.31*	.25

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 3

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables**Predicting Job Readiness (N = 47)*

Step	Variables entered	Increment in R^2	F	p	β
1	Demographic characteristics, and social self-efficacy	0.287	2.684	0.028	
2	General self-efficacy	0.324	32.447	0.0001	0.74*

Table 4

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables**Predicting Job Readiness (N = 47)*

Step	Variables entered	Increment in R^2	F	p	β
1	Demographic characteristics, and general self-efficacy	0.611	10.451	0.0001	
2	Social self-efficacy	0.0001	0.029	0.865	-0.021

Table 5

*Mediating Role of General Self-Efficacy on the Relationship of
Social Self-Efficacy and Job Readiness*

Variable	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	r
Step 1			
Social self-efficacy	0.31*	-0.02	0.31*
Step 2			
General self-efficacy		0.76**	0.75**
ΔR^2		0.47**	
ΔF	4.75*	46.89**	
Total adjusted R^2	0.08	0.54	

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

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